RETROACTION

ISSUE THREE AUTUMN 2009

GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES

The legacy, the games, the ports, the remakes, the sequels

RETROZINES

We take a look at some of the great retro fanzines, past and present

MOTHER OF ALL PROJECTS

Clyde "mato" Mandelin talks about the epic *Mother* translation projects

BLADE RUNNER

Westwood Studio's epic sci-fi adventure. Plus we chat with Louis Castle, the main man behind the game's production

A lot can happen in a matter of months… Eagle-eyed readers may spot a space left open in the credits mast to the left, and, if your memory is great, you'll realise that is where our Deputy Editor's name usually resides. Unfortunately, mandatory military service has caught up with our dear Gnome and we're going to have to soldier on… without him for the next few issues. Don't despair though as that space in the credits mast will remain open until his safe return. You may also notice a new position and new name there; Alan Leffingwell is our Sub Editor, and is here to sort out our grammar and spelling catastrophes.

I often see people putting down the homebrew scene or just ignoring it completely. Since we launched *Retroaction* back in February, I've even noticed comments stating that these games are nothing but "amateur crap". The homebrew scene is a vitally important part of retrogaming, and helps keep the old machines alive as new games are released on a variety of classic platforms. These developers take the time and effort to make these games so it's only fair that we cover them with similar effort and enthusiasm. Besides, you only need to look at this issue's selection of games to see that there are some quality homebrew game releases out there; *Skipp and Friends* and *Knight 'N' Grail* are as polished—if not, more so than commercial releases.

Now, you can't have missed our front cover which features Ray McCoy, the star of Westwood Studio's sci-fi adventure *Blade Runner*. Not only do we take an in-depth look at that epic, sci-fi point and click game, but we also managed to chat with Louis Castle, the main man behind the game's production.

A special point of interest in this issue is our eight page feature on *Ghostbusters* games. With the recent release of the next-gen *Ghostbusters* game and rumours of a third *GB* film, we felt it was appropriate to re-visit the franchise's gaming past. We spoke to the *Mother* project lead translator, Mato, about bringing that classic RPG game to Western audiences. Following last issue's "Retro Magazines" article, we have now done one on retro fanzines. We thought there would be a few decent publications out there, but we weren't prepared for the astonishing passion and quality found in over a dozen e-zines around the world, past and present.

There's also the usual mix of regular articles (Raiders of the Lost Arcades, How to Cause A Complete Controversy, Retro Respect, Emulator Profile, Weird and Wonderful World of Retrogaming), plus we've got interviews, reviews (homebrew, remakes) and more. Phew.

Enjoy.

The *Retroaction* team

RETROACTION

EDITOR, DESIGNER
Neil Reive

SUB EDITOR
Alan Leffingwell

CONTRIBUTORS
Ack
CaptainD
Duffman
Mark Hall
Matty
Duncan Rule
Mohammed Soussi
Richard Tarjan
Carl "triverse" Williams

"That's my story, just the way I lived it... The galaxy I am in today doesn't appear on any of our navigation charts; It's impossible for me to calculate my return trajectory. I'll probably drift in space for a very long time..."

www.retroactionmagazine.com

blog.retroactionmagazine.com

Retroaction © The *Retroaction* team, 2009. All copyrights have been acknowledged and games are covered solely for educational and criticism purposes. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form without our explicit written permission. You are free, and encouraged, to link to the original file for download from our website. You may also use pages for preview purposes. We have taken great care to ensure that what we have published is accurate, but cannot be liable for any mistakes or misprints. *Retroaction* is an independent publication and websites mentioned are not affiliated to or controlled by us. We are not responsible for the content of these sites or any changes made to them.

4 RETRO SCENE

8 PREVIEW: GEMVENTURE

9 INTERVIEW: TOM LIVAK

10 BLADE RUNNER: ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF SCI-FI ADVENTURING

14 INTERVIEW: LOUIS CASTLE

17 KILLER APP: F-ZERO

20 TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM, PART 2

23 RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCADES: ALIEN VS PREDATOR

26 GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES

35 RETRO RESPECT: DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

37 REVIEWS INDEX

39 INTERVIEW: MUKUNDA JOHNSON

60 MOTHER OF ALL PROJECTS

64 RETRO RESPECT: ROBOWARRIOR

67 COMPUTER WARRIOR, PART 3

71 ATARI STE: WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

73 EMULATOR PROFILE: STEEM

75 HOW TO CAUSE A COMPLETE CONTROVERSY: CUSTER'S REVENGE

78 RETRO RESPECT: MAGIC: THE GATHERING

80 RETRO FANZINES

85 THE WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WORLD OF RETROGAMING: UNSENSIBLE WORLD OF CANNON MOON SOCCER MEETS BULLDOG BLIGHTY

THE
MOTHER 3
FAN TRANSLATION
THIS IS A FREE, UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION MADE ENTIRELY BY DEDICATED MOTHER / EARTHBOUND FANS. PLEASE SUPPORT THIS SERIES BY PURCHASING OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE, INCLUDING THE OFFICIAL TRANSLATION IF ONE IS EVER RELEASED.
English
v1.1
THE TRANSLATION TEAM
MOTHER3.FOBBY.NET

RETRO SCENE

The latest news from the world of retrogaming

PDROMS Competition v4.01: the results

The recent PDRoms coding competition has come to an end and the results have been announced.

#1 *Skipp and Friends* (SNES)
by Mukunda Johnson, Ken Snyder, Steven Velema and Hubert Lamontagne.
1325 points
Game Card

#2 *Factory Bots* (GBA)
by Nicholas Scheltema.
1225 points
Game Card

#3 *Poomania* (GBA)
by Metalvotze.
1110 points
Game Card

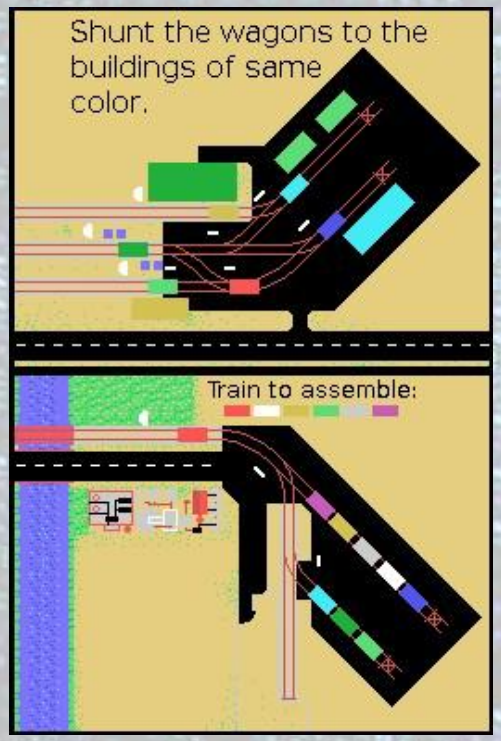
#4 *Clem the Retarded Elf 2* (GBA)
by Scott Lininger.
1065 points
Game Card

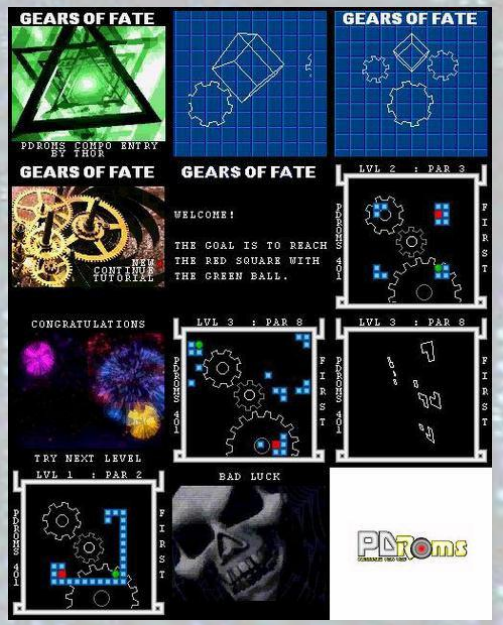
#5 *Shunting Puzzle* (ColecoVision)
by Philipp Klaus Krause.
1030 points
Game Card

#6 *GemVenture* (Beta) (NES)
by Tom Livak.
1000 points
Game Card

#7 *Gears Of Fate* (NGPC)
by Thor.
990 points
Game Card

#8 *Droplets* (GBA)
by Herman Samso.
535 points
Game Card





Nreive interviewed at J-OMG

If you want to find out a bit more about the origins of *Retroaction*'s design and look then head over to Just One More Game, where the editor/designer is forced to answer to Cardinal Ximinez in what can only be described as The Spanish Inquisition, which nobody expects. There's also exclusive never-seen-before pages of an early draft of the *Amstrad Action* tribute magazine, which was the blueprint for *Retroaction*'s design.

Retro Respect: Michael Jackson's Moonwalker

It was a sad time for the entertainment industry on June 25th, and indeed the whole world, with the passing of Michael Jackson. Paying tribute to MJ, thousands of fans purchased his albums and singles, with most of them re-entering the charts (his *Number Ones* album has topped the Offical UK Album Chart). Ashamedly, I don't own any of his albums (I was never really into music in the eighties), but even I can recognise the sheer talent that Michael Jackson had as a singer and a dancer. He truly was an all round performer the likes of which we will never see again. To pay tribute in some little way, I fired up *Moonwalker* on the Sega Mega Drive and had a great nostalgic multimedia trip down memory lane...

Read the full Retro Respect article at our Blog page...

MSXdev'09 begins

The MSXdev game competition has been running for six years now, and despite the deadline for this year's competition being 1st December 2009, there are already two games completed for it, *Plumber* and *Castle Tomb*. Both games are available to download along with the manual and source code. Just head off to the MSXdev website and scroll down to their respective gamecard.

Passion MSX2 contest 1st edition closed

Passion MSX's recent contest has come to an end, with two games entered. The contest is for the MSX2 and entries come on a ROM with manual and ROM label. The two entries were the *Bejewled* inspired puzzler *Shift* (by Infinite) and the shoot-'em-up *Equivocal* (by TNI). Although there wasn't as much interest as originally hoped, a second contest is planned for next year.

Download Shift
Download Equivocal

Retromags acquires even more first issues of retro magazines

Those dedicated people at Retromags.com have been busy the past few months gathering together even more first issues of a handful of publications.

The very first issue of *Game Informer*, which was scanned by Phillyman and edited by triverse, was acquired via eBay for $65.50. Games reviewed in this issue include *Decap Attack* and *NHL Hockey* for the Sega Genesis (Mega Drive), and *Micro Machines* for the NES. You can find *Game Informer* #1 at Retromags' download section.

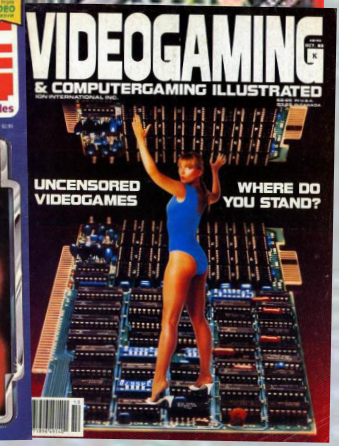
Here we have the very first issue of *Electronic Games Magazine* (the first video gaming magazine published in the United States), which ran from 1981 to 1985. Scanned, edited, and compiled by Kitsune, the CBR (Comic Book Reader archive) can be found here.

Admittedly, I hadn't heard of *Electronic Fun with Computers and Games*, so the download of its first ever issue (which can be found here) is all the more intriguing. This rare first issue from November 1982 was scanned, edited, and compiled by Kitsune.

Videogaming & Computergaming Illustrated is the latest issue 1 magazine to appear. This issue, from October 1983, was scanned by s1500 and edited/compiled by triverse. The magazine can be found here.

GAME INFORMER™
Magazine
Fall Issue 1991
Sizzling Hot Pre-Release Reviews Inside!
• De-Cap-Attack
• Micro Machines
• NHL Hockey
Game Genie Controversy
Best Bets To Keeping Equipment Clean
Super Sonic Tips Throughout This Issue
What's New For Fall? Screen Previews Inside
FUNCO: The Best Way to Increase Your Video Game Library!

PLAYER'S GUIDE TO PROGRAMMABLE VIDEOGAMES
electronic GAMES
Videogames · Computer Games · Stand-Alone Games · Arcades
CAN ASTEROIDS CONQUER SPACE INVADERS?
ATTACK OF THE CHESS ROBOTS
INSIDE THE TRS-80 COLOR COMPUTER
STRATEGY SESSION: SPACE INVADERS & BREAKOUT—TRICKS TO WIN!
TOUCHDOWN! YOU'RE THE COACH WITH ELECTRONIC FOOTBALL
HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING FOR GAMERS



Out-Of-Print Archive

I'm a great fan of old computer and videogaming magazines, so I was delighted to hear the news that Out-Of-Print Archive (a Classic videogaming magazine preservation) was created. To me (and to many retrogamers, I would think), classic magazines were as important as the games themselves. You may have lost many of the magazines you had, but you can relive them again by browsing through scanned images of the issues. Out-Of-Print Archive has opened with a marvellous 10th anniversary feature on the Dreamcast, including some fine scans of Dreamcast magazine pages throughout. The feature is a great read, and with plans for similar things in the future, not to mention access to thousands of magazine scans, Out-Of-Print Archive is the website to visit for your classic videogaming magazine fix.

New retro zines launched

Classic Video Gamer magazine premier issue

A new retrogaming magazine has been unleashed in the form of *Classic Video Gamer* Magazine. The magazine is available to download in PDF, for a small fee, or purchased in print format at the *Classic Video Gamer* Magazine website. The 20 page issue crams in articles on classic games and looks at some of the current homebrew offerings. For an in-depth review of the launch issue, check out triverse's write up over at Retromags.com.

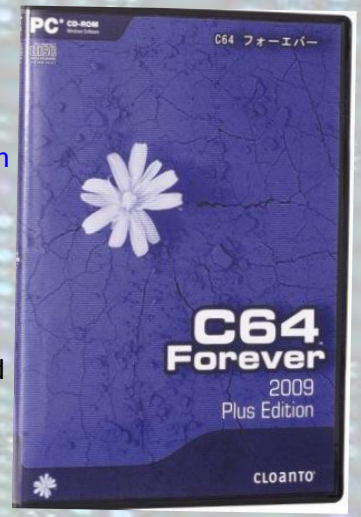
ZX Shed Reloaded issue 1

ZX Shed has returned with a new look, a new editor, and a new bi-monthly release schedule. As you'd expect from a Spectrum zine, *ZX Shed Reloaded* covers all things ZX Spectrum as well as other Sinclair platforms. Issue 1 includes reviews, previews, interviews, tutorials, programmer's diary, features, and more. If you are a Sinclair fan, or just a retrogamer in general, then you really should check it out. You can find issue 1 at the World of Spectrum website. Also, keep an eye on the WoS *ZX Shed* forum and *ZX Shed* website for further news.

C64 Forever

What is C64 Forever? Well, why try to explain when the official site does it so well? "C64 Forever embodies an intuitive player interface, backed by a built-in database containing more than 5000 C64 game entries, and advanced support for the new RP2 format, dubbed the 'MP3 of retrogaming'." If you've seen the Amiga Forever package (which you can also get at the C64 Forever site), then you will be familiar with what's on offer here.

The C64 Forever package comes in two flavours: a downloadable ISO image (which you can burn to CD), or the Boxed+Download package (which comes in a slick looking DVD case), plus you get the option to download the ISO as well. Excellent stuff. The Download package comes in at £12.20 GBP ($19.95 USD & 14.06 EUR) and the Boxed+Download package is £15.25 GBP ($24.95 USD & 17.58 EUR). Sound good? Then head over to C64Forever.com where you can find a full rundown of features, FAQ, screenshots and place and order.



Armalyte remake demo available

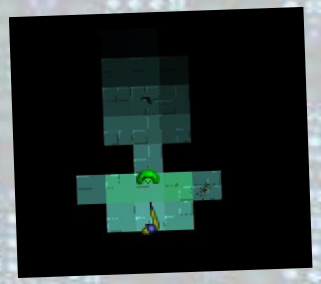
We reported last issue that Smila and Stu Ovine are working on an official remake of the classic shoot-'em-up *Armalyte*. Well, now there is a playable demo available to download, which can be found at publisher Psytronik's website.

A Tribute to the Sisters

A remake of *Giana Sisters* is in the works for the Amstrad CPC. Called *A Tribute to the Sisters*, the 128k game is being programmed by TFM, with sound by Kangaroo Musiqu, and GFX by Tolkin. Created due to the poor beta CPC version of *Giana Sisters*, this will be a conversion of the C64 and Amiga version. The game's work in progress demo can be found at the CPCWiki. You will need FutureOS to run the game, though.

BOH

While we're predominantly retro here, we're not totally ignorant of indie games, especially if they have a retro feel to them, and *BOH* certainly fits that description. *BOH*, which is available on AmigaOS 4, MacOS X, and Windows XP/Vista, is an exploration game, mixing action, puzzles, and adventure excellently. With its realistic field of vision gameplay—by default, you only see what is in front of your character—the game's developer, Simone Bevilacqua (a.k.a. saimo), has created a truly unique game, which we don't see often enough. Visit the *BOH* website to find out more. There are screenshots, trailers, videos, demos, images, themes, and more available to download. And if you like what you see, then why not purchase the game, which comes on CD-ROM (in DVD case) with a 24-page colour manual?



HOC INIT EXIT

Saimo has released a preview demo of a C64 game, that he has been working on and off since November 2008. *HOC INIT EXIT*, which is Latin for "whatever gets in, gets out", is available to download in D64 format from saimo's webspace.

Orion Prime

After reporting on the fantastic *Orion Prime* teaser in last issue's news section, it has been announced that the game is now finished and available to purchase on 3" or 3.5" disk from the *Orion Prime* website. Although the game has been programmed in French, there are plans to translate the game to English, Spanish, and German.

Ghost N Zombies

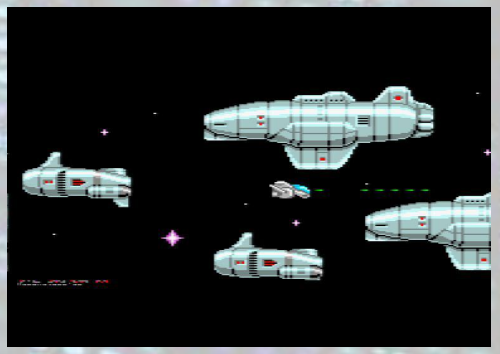
Ghost N Zombies is a ColecoVision game developed by J-P Meola (a.k.a. youki) and is slated for a Fall 2009 release. The game can be pre-ordered by visiting the Collectorvision website, where you can find more details about the game and other ColecoVision titles for sale or in production. Hurry though, because there is a limited production run of games, which are packaged in the official CBS-ColecoVision European style boxes. There's also an excellent interview with youki over at UnNamedGaming, which is where I discovered this little gem of a game.

Robotron 6128

I don't think anyone needs any introduction to Robotron, so I'll get straight onto the Amstrad CPC version. The CPC game is a Work In Progress and can be played online at or the disk image can be downloaded. The game is shaping up very well indeed, so let's hope that coder Lachlan can keep the good work up.

Wildfire

An *R-Type* horizontal shoot-'em-up from coder "fano". The 128k game has been in the works for a while now, and looks great so far. You can find out more info and download a demo from the CPCWiki's entry for the game.



GEMVENTURE

Words & screenshots by Carl "triverse" Williams

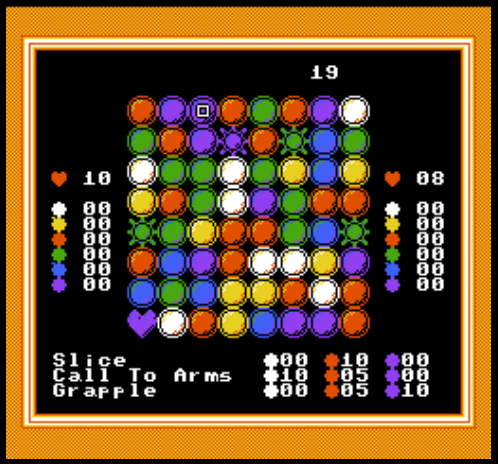
Ever want to see *Puzzle Quest* on NES? Probably not, but if you are a fan of *Competition Bejeweled* (as I call it) then you will enjoy *GemVenture* (*GV* from now on in this preview). You take turns moving tiles around and forming matches of three or more after which those tiles disappear and the rest drop down. Programmed by Tom Livak for the recent PDROMS.de competition it came sixth out of the top eight entries. *GV* is currently in Beta (the version previewed here) but don't let that stop you from playing it. The only things really missing from the final game are some play balancing, additional sounds and player/enemy graphics. The core gameplay is here and that is what matters most. The foundation is laid for everything else to be added on as time and interest permits (it is tough programming a game alone).

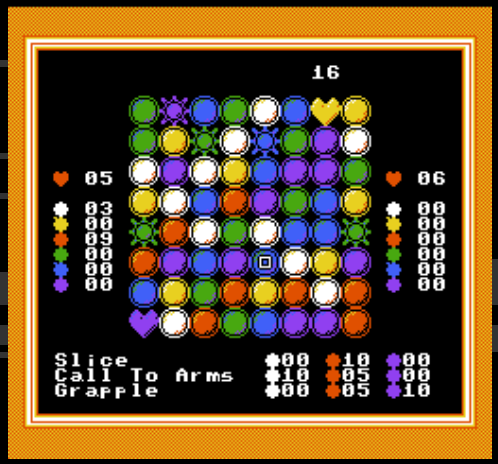
Being for the NES I didn't expect a whole lot from *GV*, after all, professional teams dropped the platform like a hot potato years ago. What chance does a single programmer have at making a game that is going to be good? I was wrong; *GV* is simply a great puzzle game. You get the core elements of *Puzzle Quest*, a similar fantasy setting and of course some incredibly lucky A.I.. Fans of these games are going to just have to deal with that A.I. situation—much like in fighting games where the computer controller fighter can pull off amazing moves (early SNK fighters were notorious for this) at just the right moment. In *GV* puzzle fans have an A.I. that just happens to be able to pull off four or five matched long chains with a single match at the top of the screen.

GV is not a rip off of *Puzzle Quest* any more than *Tekken* is a rip off of *Street Fighter II*. *GV* has tiles to match that give you health (hearts) rather than saving up to cast a spell to heal. While you do have spells, they are mostly offensive with a few defensives thrown in (but you are limited to three spells per character). You still attack with tiles (the spiked ones) and collect tiles for spell casting. You only collect the color of tiles that your character uses. Each character uses certain colors for their magic spells such as the Monk who needs 10 White and 5 Blue mana to cast restore but doesn't use yellow, red or purple mana. You can still collect the mana not used by your character, it just won't be added to your mana pool.

The graphics are not that special at first glance but when you realize that this is the NES—a system that was technically designed back in 1983 (over 26 years ago) and not something that is running on the latest hardware—the graphics are pretty good. The sounds included are pretty sparse but that is mainly because of the limited time available for programming the Beta version for the PDROMS competition. You do get some sound effects; just don't expect anything near a complete musical score. Expect better sound in the game once it is finished.

If you're a fan of *Puzzle Quest* and enjoy competition *Bejeweled* games then you will definitely like *GemVenture*. It's more than worth the download.





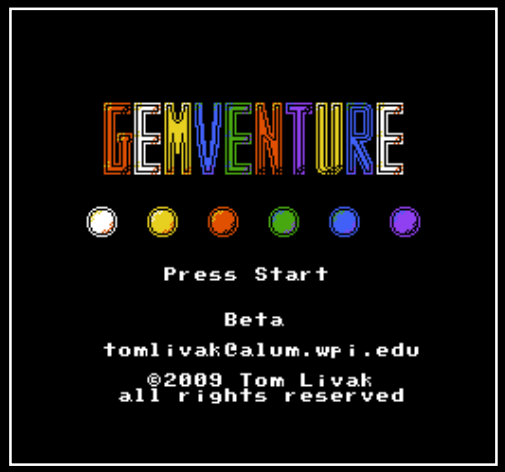
DETAILS

Developer:	Tom Livak
Platform:	NES
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	VirtuaNES
Genre:	Puzzle

Having just played the beta version of the game, Carl "triverse" Williams contacted the game's developer Tom Livak for a little background info...

Retroaction: How about an introduction so fans of *GemVenture* can understand the man behind the game better?
Tom Livak: I'm 28, I live in Massachusetts. I played a lot of NES as a kid, and decided I wanted to make video games. That got me into computer programming, and I work as [a] software engineer now. I don't work in the games industry, but enjoy doing game work in my free time.

R: How did you come up with the concept of *GemVenture*?
TL: I don't know, one day I just thought "I bet I could make a *PuzzleQuest* type game on the NES." I put the idea aside at first, because I was working on other projects. But when PDROMS started a contest with puzzle games as the theme, it seemed like a good time to revive it.



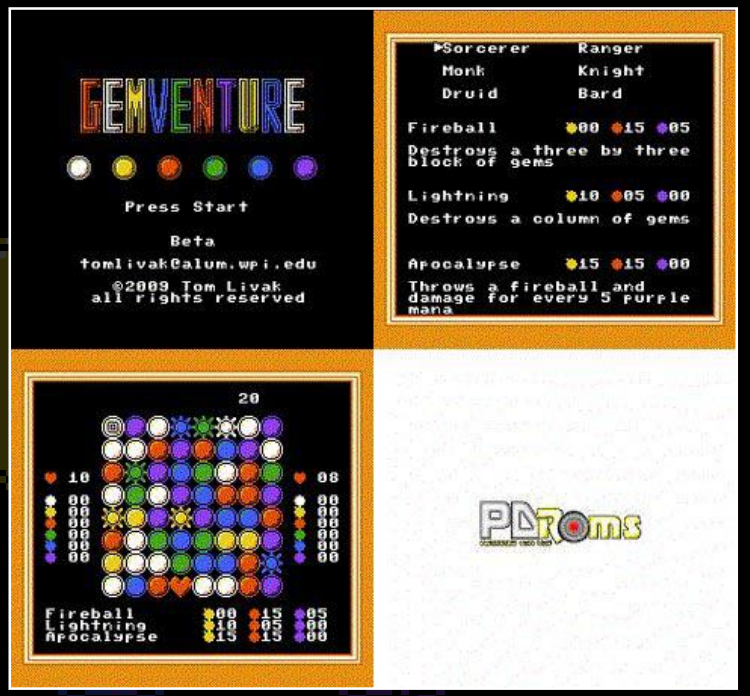
R: Why the NES of all systems?
TL: Well the NES is what I played [as] a kid, so I have a great deal of fondness for it. A couple years back I decided to try my hand at writing an NES emulator, and then PDROMS started a contest which included the NES. So I thought I'd try my hand at NES development.

R: How limited were you working with the NES hardware?
TL: Well there's a limited number of colors allowed on screen at once, which required a little bit of creativity sharing colors between tiles. And the NES can only display a limited number of sprites at a time, which is why new gems drop in column by column. I was worried about getting a decent AI given the low clock rate, but it ended up not being a problem.

R: The current version being a beta, can you give us some hints as to what is to change or be added in the final?
TL: There were a couple of things I didn't finish in time for the contest, namely music and graphics for the characters and monsters. The contest deadline also meant I didn't get to really test all the spells and monsters for balance, so there might be some tweaking of those.

R: Do you have an idea of when the final will be released?
TL: Not really. I got a little burnt out on the project trying to get it done for [the] contest deadline, so I've taken a little break from working on it.

R: Will *GemVenture* be ported to any other systems like Dreamcast or GBA?
TL: I might try porting it to the DS.



R: Will there be an actual cartridge release someday?
TL: If people were interested in a cartridge release, definitely.

R: Do you have plans for a sequel yet?
TL: My original plan included a lot of features that were cut due the length of the contest, like getting items that would grant additional bonuses or powers. I might get around to implementing all those in a sequel.

R: Any tips for people that have never played this type of game before?
TL: Mostly you need to get good at looking at the board and seeing the best move. If you keep playing, eventually the patterns will start to stand out to you. Generally the best move is one that damages your opponent, or heals you, or gives you the mana you need for your spells. But you can also look at denying your opponent good moves, or denying them the mana they need. For instance the goblin needs green mana to use his dodge ability, so it can be good to take green mana just so he can't get it.

R: Do you have any additional comments you would like to add for fans of *GemVenture*?
TL: I'd love to hear from people who enjoyed the game. It'll encourage me to work on it and future projects!

BLADE RUNNER™

ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF SCI-FI ADVENTURING

Words & screenshots by
Neil Reive

DETAILS

Developer:	Westwood Studios
Publisher:	Virgin Interactive
Released:	1997
Platform:	PC Windows
Genre:	Adventure

No, it's not a still from the film, but rather a capture of the game's fab opening sequence

***Blade Runner*'s gameplay is carried out using the standard point-and-click method**

The KIA is a handy tool for organising your clues for easy retrieval

Many familiar landscapes and buidlings will be found in the game. Cold fish, anyone?

It's dusk as we move toward the cityscape up ahead. A vast plain of industrialized, menacing shapes loom on the horizon. Venting stacks pierce the skyline and belch out flames five hundred feet into the sky. A spinner (car/air vehicle hybrid) flies towards the camera and by. The view then cuts into a city where a video advertisement on the side of a large skyscraper displays all kinds of products. A spinner again flies by and weaves tightly through the spaces between the towering landscape constructions as we zoom into a dark, gloomy street. It's peace and quiet as the camera moves slowly in on Runciter's Animal shop...

The sequence described above could easily be mistaken for being from the film itself. It is in fact just a small segment taken from the game's fabulous opening sequence which beautifully sets the tone for what is to follow.

Blade Runner the computer game is a point and click adventure that features an original story set in the film's universe and same timeframe. When the game begins, Deckard (the film's protagonist) has already been sent off on his own assignment and the player will hear references of his activities throughout the game though they will never cross paths. The player assumes the role of Ray McCoy, a rookie *Blade Runner*, who is given his first serious crime to solve by his commanding officer, Lt. Guzza. Replicants are suspected of murdering animals which is considered a monstrous crime in the future when all animals are virtually extinct.

Playing as McCoy, the player has to investigate a number of crime scenes using various techniques (searching for clues, questioning witnesses/suspects, researching police evidence), typical of detectives to gather information. During these investigations McCoy will endure many events including uncovering a black market gun runner and being framed for the murder of a civilian (forcing him to work underground to try and clear his name). He will also discover corruption within his own police department, blackmail and much more. It becomes clear that, as with the film, the replicants in the game are heavy-handed in their quest to gain more life.

Blade Runner's main focus is the detective work rather than the games many puzzles. The player progresses through a number of crime scenes in which they must gather evidence. This is primarily a matter of being observant of the surroundings. Clues come in the form of items, photographs, personal interviews or unusual markings. An ESPER system (as

[the] intro sequence sets the tone for the outstanding, well written, and produced science fiction adventure epic that is to follow

"You wake up one day and find it's all been a dream or you wake up and discover you've been asleep all the time and the nightmare is real. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know what *I* was. A cop dangling on the short end of a stick or a Replicant whose memory banks had run out." - Ray McCoy

seen in the film) can be used to enhance and enlarge photos, potentially finding some crucial information. Combat in *Blade Runner* is actually quite rare and not too complicated. There is one weapon in the game-a standard issue police pistol-although different varieties of ammunition are available later in the game.

All evidence collected during investigations is stored in McCoy's Knowledge Integration Assistant (KIA), where it is organized for easy reference later on. One of its functions is performed via the Crime Scene Panel which lists all crime scenes along with all known suspects and clues related to it. There are also occasions when the player will be able to carry out the infamous Voight-Kampff test (as seen in the film) on suspects. This involves trying to get an emotional response from the subject and to determine if they're human or a replicant. Once the test is finished the player must then decide what course of action to take based on the results. The player's decision has a direct impact on the rest of the storyline.

The game's script is superb and features many clever sequences (cut scenes, set pieces, action scenes), witty dialogue and powerfully emotional characters, all of which wouldn't look amiss amongst Hollywood's finest offerings. The cut scenes in particular advance the story and character development extremely well. The game is basically a five-act story with a lot of emotion weaving together the stories of several different characters. Every thing you do has consequences: the moral dilemma in killing what may or may not be human or making a wrong decision and having the police hunt you down. These situations all add to this games deeply emotional experience.

The game runs in non-linear real-time meaning that when McCoy investigates and gathers clues the computer controlled characters go about their own business, completing their own objectives. While the plot generally begins the same every time you start a new game-there is an animal murder, McCoy investigates, he discovers replicants-it plays out differently each time. There are numerous endings (I have personally seen nine) with variations on major themes. All of which are influenced by the player's actions throughout the game.

The expansive voice cast of *Blade Runner* deliver their lines impeccably, bringing their character's personality to the fore. Each and every character-of which there are many-has their own story, their own characteristics and their own agenda. Ray McCoy is the disheveled, trench coat wearing

The game's script is superb, featuring many clever sequences, witty dialogue, powerful emotional characters, and wouldn't look amiss amongst Hollywood's finest offerings

"I can handle it from here, Slim. Why don't you go buy yourself a lolly pop? Something else to suck on." - Crystal

"Whatever is born of mortal birth must be consumed with the Earth. To rise from generation free, so what am I to do with thee." - Clovis

Character movements are carried out easily with just the mouse

Use the ESPER to gather further clues—there's more to these pictures than meets the eye

While many of the locations will be familiar, others are not so, but, are interesting all the same

Your investigations take you down to all sorts of buildings, like Early Q's the nightclub

The map is small to begin with, but opens up as you progress through the game

The cut scenes' visuals are astonishing, especially considering the game's age

"I'm what you call a survivor. I've crawled through the slimiest sludge of hell and lived to tell the tale. I'll be around long after everybody forgets that you were on the job." - Guzza

protagonist; Crystal Steele, a cool exterior and one of the most effective police officers; Gaff, a character originally presented in the film, appears randomly to offer advice; Lieutenant Guzza is McCoy's coarse, overweight superior; Lucy is a troubled teenager who is unsure whether she is a replicant or a human and Clovis is the intelligent leader of the renegade replicants. That's just the main group of characters as there are also many, many supporting characters of equal importance to the game's plot.

Showing a dystopian, heavily polluted Los Angeles, the game is notable for its accurate, even lovingly re-created environments. Faithfully reproduced locales are so effective by their use of familiar landmarks like the Tyrell pyramid structure, the Bradbury theatre, Animoid Row, the Yukon hotel and the L.A.P.D.'s cylindrical skyscraper. Despite not requiring a 3D accelerated video card at a time when it was all the rage, the graphics—especially the numerous cut scenes—were innovative for the time and succeeded in recreating the film's atmosphere. The characters are as impressive as the environments and although they may look slightly pixellated close up when you see them moving their true fluidity is clearly evident. Other visual effects like rain, coloured lights, lens flares and shadows all add to the dark, moody feel of the game.

Completing the cinematic quality of the game is the sound. Suitably emotional musical scores and satisfying sound effects are arranged throughout. Not only have Vangelis' original scores been recreated perfectly, new original ones have been produced just for the game. Joe Turkel, Sean Young, William Sanderson, Brion James and James Hong (who starred in the original film) returned to voice their on-screen characters, adding yet another layer of authenticity to the game.

Westwood Studios could have taken the easy way out and made a typical adventure game by retelling the film scene by scene. Luckily they wanted to do something more. The fact that they struggled to squeeze the game onto four CDs is testament to just how much detail is in this game. With great storytelling, superb design, sublime aesthetics and faithful performances all coming together perfectly, this amounts to a deeply satisfying game that should be experienced by all fans of adventure games and the film.

Not only has Vangelis' original score been recreated perfectly, but also new original ones have been produced just for the game

Gaff (voiced by Victor Gardell):
You killed anyone yet? It's like I said, retire a human and your career is over, your life too maybe. But we don't live forever do we?

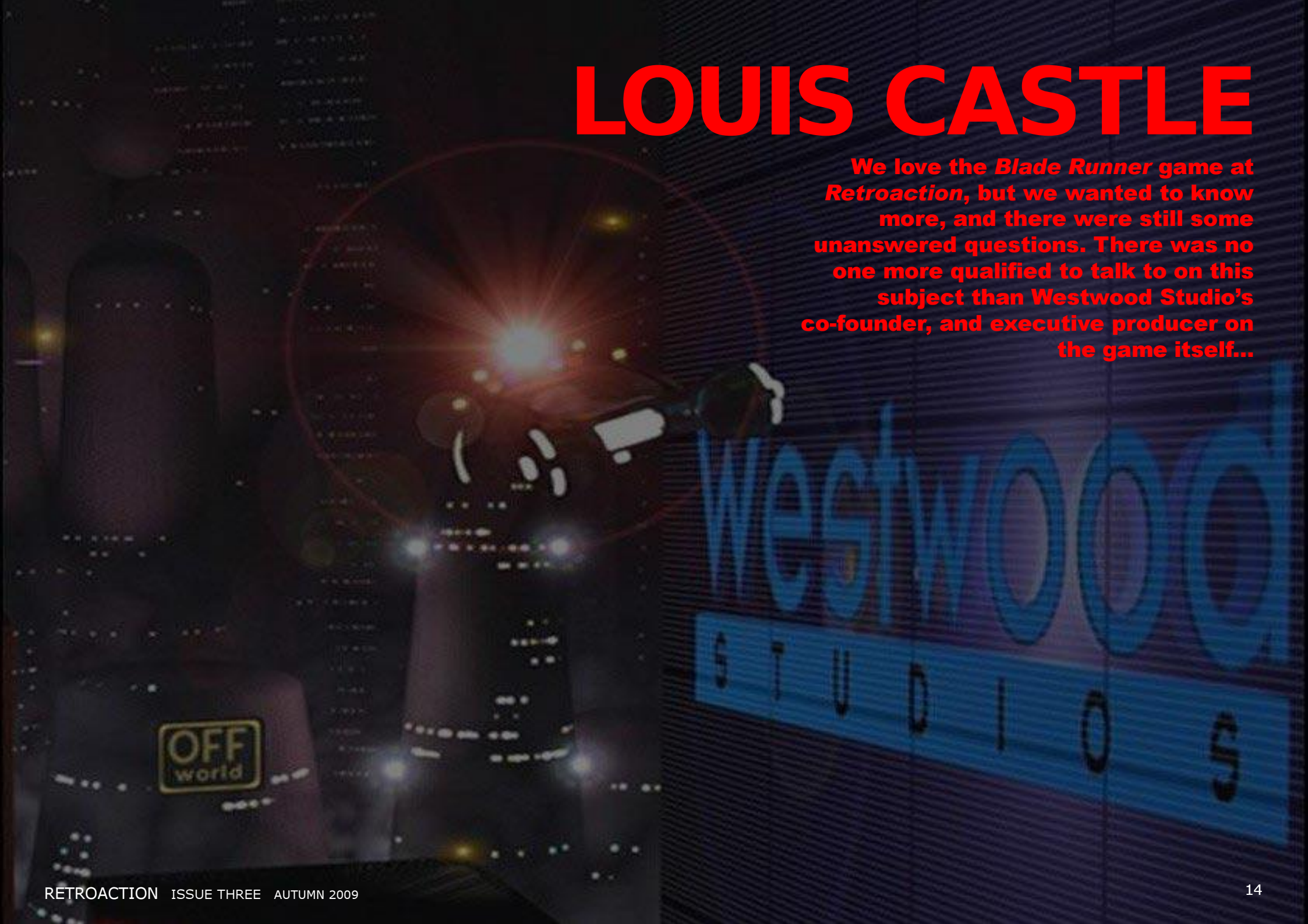
Chew (voiced by James Hong):
Busy, busy. All these distractions all day long. Loud bangs, boom, boom, boom.

Tyrell (voiced by Joe Turkel):
As I explained to Mr. Deckard earlier, I've given the Nexus 6 model a past. I've given it the purity and innocence of childhood, and all the despair and joy that comes with a real existence. That's hardly a death sentence... That's life.

Gaff: Steele is looking for you, and Bryant. You've been keeping the whole department hopping… you and Guzza.
McCoy: You looking for me too, Gaff?
Gaff: Looking... not killing. I'm in a good mood today.

LOUIS CASTLE

We love the *Blade Runner* game at *Retroaction*, but we wanted to know more, and there were still some unanswered questions. There was no one more qualified to talk to on this subject than Westwood Studio's co-founder, and executive producer on the game itself...



Retroaction: Can you briefly introduce yourself to our readers?
Louis Castle: Louis Castle, co-founder Westwood Studios, former VP Creative Development for EA, CEO of Instant Action Holdings.

R: How did you get into video gaming and, in particular, co-founding Westwood Studios?
LC: I started as an artist intrigued by art on CRTs and learned how to program to animate my work. I did some animations for games, got hooked and in 1985 my friend Brett Sperry and I decided to make a game company instead of working as independent contractors. Westwood was born!

R: What made Westwood decide to develop a *Blade Runner* game, especially considering that the film had been released over ten years previously?
LC: It had always been my favorite film and when we found out that we had a chance to pitch for the rights we jumped at it. Our idea was to do the best job possible in replicating the mood and emotional impact of the film, which I believe is why we won the bid.

R: Did The Blade Runner Partnership make any suggestions regarding the plot, characters, or the look of the game?
LC: The Blade Runner Partners were very involved at the top level for the game. They specifically did not want something derivative of shooters and RPGs in the market at the time. Their primary concern was that the game expand the IP and not simply be a game that had the license slapped onto it. It was a true financial and creative partnership but we were completely in charge of how to accomplish the broad vision.

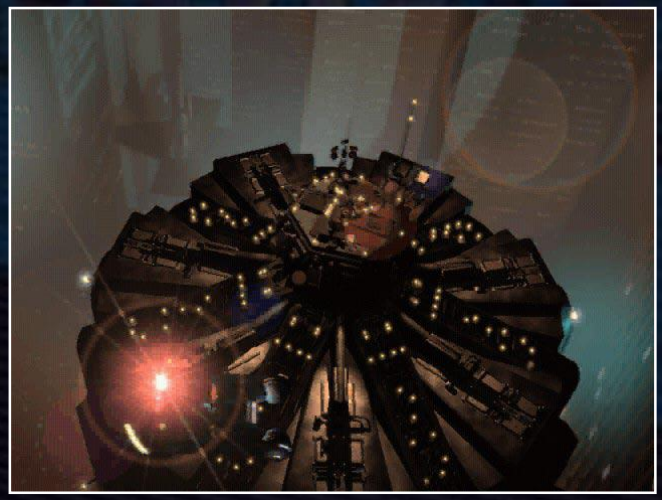
R: The first thing that gamers will notice is that there is no Rick Deckard in the game. Was that a decision taken by yourselves or a copyright/ request issue made by the BRP?
LC: Deckard is mentioned many times in the game and can even be seen occasionally. It was a creative decision to build a story within a story so that we could have the player be in control of their own destiny. Very few games that require players to "play the film" end up having the kind of emotional punch you get from the original work.

"It was a creative decision to build a story within a story so that we could have the player be in control of their own destiny."

R: So, it doesn't have Deckard, but it does have a completely new story, characters, and supporting characters all doing their own thing with numerous outcomes—it's almost like a movie script. How did it all come together to form a computer game?
LC: It was written as a complete 200 page script by David Yorkin, an extraordinarily talented Hollywood writer. That was then expanded by David Leary, our lead designer for *Blade Runner* into well over 500 pages and finally reviewed and tuned by David Yorkin again before we had the final shooting script. It was a massive undertaking given all the permutations of game states that were possible in the story simulation.

R: There are some superb cut-scene sequences and a lot of great dialogue in there. Was it always the intention to give the game a filmic quality like this?
LC: Absolutely. We knew from the beginning that the fans of the film would want nothing less than a visual experience respectful of the original film.

R: *Blade Runner* uses a "voxel" graphics engine, which produces some fine looking graphics, especially considering that it doesn't require a 3D accelerator card. Can you explain the voxel engine to us?
LC: Well, today we would think of the *Blade Runner* world renderer as a deferred lighting renderer where the scenes and camera moves were pre rendered as geometry and the lighting was added in real time. Pre-rendered elements were also layered into the scene in real time using a software z-buffer completing the visual effect of millions of polygons being rendered in real time. The characters are truly voxels. The biggest regret the team had was that we did not have time to optimize the motion capture data for all the NPC characters and since



the voxel budget gets divided over the number of frames, many characters were very blocky unnecessarily. The voxel technology was capable of some amazing visuals.

R: The game features a realistic *Blade Runner* world with faithfully reproduced scenes, set pieces, and music. Just how long was *Blade Runner* in production for, and were there any problems during this time?
LC: (laughs) Like all games it was in production 50% longer than we expected. In all it was just a bit over two years, which was a long time back in 1997. The problems were more of trying for some really aspirational goals and simply running out of time to do them as well as we might have. That said, we are all proud of the game we created.

R: It had been said at the time by many sources that the game features 13 different endings, yet I have only managed to find nine endings. Just how many endings does *Blade Runner* have?
LC: There are forty-seven permutations but only seven broad categories. The difference in the endings has to do with the random selection of which NPCs will be replicants and the way the world simulation plays out in real time. There are a few very interesting endings around love interests that were exceptionally rare. One was listed as a bug since the tester had never seen it and thought it was not intended to be possible (I believe it was leaving with Lucy as a paternal love interest).

R: The voice cast for the game is vast and was quite unique for the time. Some performers from the film even reprised their roles for the game—albeit in cameos. Was this something that was always planned from the offset?
LC: Yes, we tried to get every person from the original film but some could not fit it into their schedule. Others were not professionally interested in reprising their role, but those were very few.

R: *Blade Runner* seemed to be a one-off game for Westwood. Were there no plans to develop a sequel, or even another adventure game in the same style?
LC: Both ideas were kicked around but the deal for *BR2* was too hard to reach for both sides and other ideas were put on the back burner with the decline of the Adventure Game audience.

R: The game was quite a commercial success and received some good reviews from the gaming press. Was the completed game what you had hoped it would be? Was there anything you were unsatisfied with?
LC: I always have ideas on how my games could have been better but I was and still am very proud of *Blade Runner*.

R: Westwood Studios was a respected development studio with a talented team, producing such classic gaming series as *Command and Conquer*, *Dune* and *Eye of the Beholder*. Can you tell us why the company was sold off to EA?
LC: We were owned by Virgin which was owned by Viacom. Viacom wanted to divest itself of Virgin. Westwood was very attractive to many companies including Hasbro, Microsoft, Eidos and others, but ultimately EA offered the best deal to Viacom.

R: What projects have you been involved with recently, and what are your future plans?
LC: I am no longer at EA. I am now the CEO of Instant Action Holdings, an IAC company. We will be making some announcements soon.

R: Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
LC: *Blade Runner* was one of my favorite games to make and play in my career and I'm thrilled there is still an interest in the game.

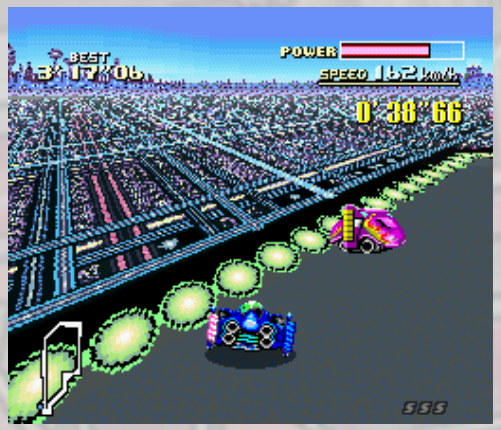
"The problems were more of trying for some really aspirational goals and simply running out of time to do them as well as we might have. That said, we are all proud of the game we created."
*- Louis Castle on development of *Blade Runner**

KILLER APP

Words by **Mohammed Soussi**, screenshots by **Neil Reive**

DETAILS

Developer:	Nintendo EAD
Publisher:	Nintendo
Released:	1990
Platform:	Super Famicom
Genre:	Racing



Don't crash into the barriers too often as it drains your power

A fork in the road. Just follow the other guys

Flying cars looks good and make for great crashes

The year is 1989 and Shigeru Miyamoto starts to vision one of his most ambitious projects to date. Within the confines of Nintendo HQ, Shigeru meets his friend Takashi Tezuka and discusses his idea for a futuristic racing game that would change the race genre forever. After speaking to Takashi, Shigeru realised that with all the new games planned or in development for the new Nintendo 16 bit Console he would need a dedicated team to overcome any upcoming problems or challenges. After a few meetings with the Nintendo big wigs it was agreed that Nintendo's various internal research and development teams would merge and become a new division called Nintendo Entertainment Analysis and Development (EAD). Shigeru and Takashi became the heads of EAD, making it easier for them to direct and micro manage the teams on the *Super Mario World* and *Dragon Fly* (a.k.a. *Pilotwings*) projects.

This merger enabled Shigeru to have more time producing his new project due to the fact that he now had over 40 devoted staff. Shigeru soon approached a young art designer, Takaya Imamura, to be the art director for the game after recognizing his potential and enthusiasm for his (Shigeru's) vision. Takaya was so shocked that Shigeru gave him such an opportunity and with so much freedom in design considering it was Takaya's first ever project. The EAD development group was set and the team had approximately 15 months to complete the game in time for the launch of the Super Famicom.

Upon completion of the game it was found to be so impressive that Nintendo decided to replace *Dragon Fly* with *F-Zero* (pairing the game with *Super Mario World)* as the two official launch titles. Nintendo knew that this would drop a bombshell on Sega. The quality of these two launches will likely never be repeated by any other system.

Let me first of all begin by stating that *F-Zero* was the first Super Famicom title to showcase Pseudo-3D graphics and was the precursor to *Mario Kart*. It surpassed people's expectation during the time of its release. *F-Zero* influenced many Amiga 500/ Mega Drive loyalists to sell off their systems and spend £300 on the Super Famicom. This is merely an example of how much influence the game had on people.

F-Zero takes place in the year 2560 when humanity's countless encounters with alien life forms

The best advice is to stay in the middle and don't stray

Argh! My eyes. The goggles, they do nothing

F-Zero influenced many to sell off their systems and spend £300 on the Super Famicom. An example of how much influence the game had on people

F-Zero very quickly became the defining title for the Super Famicom, showcasing the infamous "Mode 7" effects

throughout the universe expanded Earth's social framework to astronomic proportions. Trade, technology and cultural interchange are carried out between planets. The multibillionaires who earned their enormous wealth through this intergalactic trade are satisfied with their rich lifestyles. Restless as they were though, they also yearned for new entertainment to stimulate their lazy lives so a new entertainment based on the old F1-series of races was founded. People were at first outraged with the brutality of the competition but eventually came to enjoy it and even demand more excitement. They soon called these Grand Prix races simply F-ZERO.

You play the role of our hero Captain Falcon but are not restricted to just playing him as you can select from three other characters, each with different crafts. Each characters craft has different capabilities; speed, weight, handling and shield strength which vary according to which craft you use.

There are a total of fifteen tracks divided into three leagues with three difficulty levels to choose from. As you progress through the game the tracks start to change and become more difficult. The tracks become extended and obstacles start to appear in awkward places, increasing the challenge. Your rivals become more difficult to beat, especially when they are tailgating you. During each race you must finish in the top four in order to progress through to the next stage so watch the energy bar and remember to top-up your shield on those energy strips.

The time challenge can become an obsession as players can always try and beat their best lap records. During game play you cannot help but notice the amazing visuals and backdrops. The speed of this game complements the entire experience. Both music and sound add to the excellent atmosphere and you really feel you are living in the *F-Zero* universe. Remarkably the game only slows down a few times when there are a large number of crafts on screen.

At the time of its release *F-Zero* was truly the ultimate race game. There was nothing similar at the time, not even in the Arcades. It was revolutionary in every sense. *F-Zero* very quickly became the defining title for the Super Famicom, showcasing the infamous "Mode 7" effects and making it one of the most graphically and visually stunning games of its time. *F-Zero* is nearly 20 years old and it still looks impressive even for today's standards. The title "killer app" doesn't come easily, but I would certainly consider *F-Zero* to be one of them; a true testament to what a game can do for a system.

With such smooth handling, it's a joy to fly around the course

Tussles with opposing drivers is common. Just get used to it

Don't try to be smart and take short cuts. This stuff slows you down

One crash too many, and this is what happens

TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM

Words by **Richard Tarjan**, screenshots by **Richard Tarjan** & **Neil Reive**
Spectrum image courtesy of **Bill Bertram**

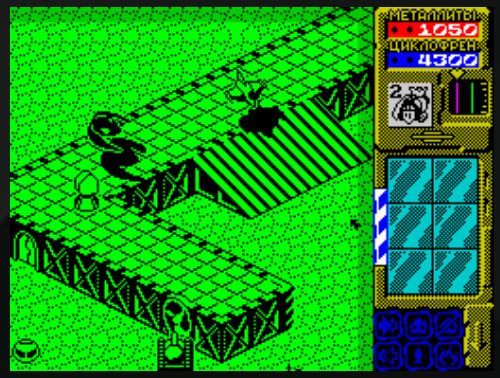
We continue our journey through the Spectrum's twilight years to find out that there was, and still is, a thriving homebrew scene after the platform's commercial demise

TWILIGHT OF THE SPECTRUM

In the 90's, Russian Spectrum homebrew games could be separated into two categories: original games, getting extremely close to the hardware maximum (*Star Inheritance*, *Kolobok Zoom 1-2*, *Pussy*, *Technodrom*, *Last Hero of the Light Force*) and PC/Amiga games that were re-written and converted to Spectrum (*Prince of Persia*, *Civilization*, *Dune 2*, etc.). Another important conversion platform was the Nintendo Entertainment System's Russian analogue, the Dendy (*Ice Climber* and dozens of *Mario* games). The most interesting fact here is that such games were released for the ZX Spectrum despite the media stating that such things were impossible.

Early programs were of quite poor quality and they were often written in Russian, meaning that they were only playable by users who understood the language. Although the reasoning behind this may be easy to understand when you consider that the ex-Soviet coders did not know that there were lots of users using their Spectrums in Europe as hobby machines. This was not such a major problem with arcade type games, but games that used a lot of text were unplayable. This was a shame as, despite some poor examples, there were some good games produced during this period that were either equal or better than commercial games released on the platform. This trend is unfortunately still common nowadays (*Anime Story*, *Sea Quest*).

***Crime Santa Claus: Deja Vu* (1997, by BrokImSoft & Rush I.S.P.A.)**



***Black Raven 2* (1998, by Copper Feet)**

You may well ask: what are the copyright specifics of these Spectrum games? The answer is that mostly the original commercial developers don't even know of the existence of the ZX-version of these games. Copyright laws are now more strict in Russia than in Europe. Despite the copyright laws many Russians are still ignoring them. Many of the original developers of the games in question will not see any money. Sadly, the same piracy is prevalent within the Russian developed programs too. Legal copies are sold in quite low volumes compared to the size of the country. Three thousand units sold was a good result from a game in the mid 1990s.

The most interesting case is probably *Prince of Persia*. Besides the original Nicodim and Magic Soft editions, numerous cracked versions were available in Russia from Another World Corp, ChuckaByte, Omega (Hackers) Group, Phantom Family, Ticklish Jim and Phantasy all had their own versions. Phantasy also released *Prince of Persia* on tape and even promised the Euro-conform Plus D floppy version too.

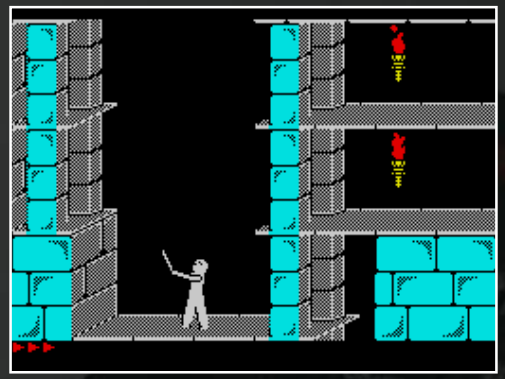
All Russian games are now Public Domain, with only two exceptions. One of these games, *Dune 2,* is a very interesting case: it was difficult to sell, as it demanded a 256K/7MHz spec machine. On the other hand its main rival, *Black Raven 1,* has been freeware since 2000, after being available for purchase in a special box with a little user book. Nowadays *Black Raven 1* can be bought from the Sinclair Club. For the games of Alex Xor, there is an unwritten agreement between Spectrumists: nobody will pirate them, and after a year the author will put them into the Public Domain.

In general, smaller groups produced these games, usually a group of friends helping each other out with each one resonsible for their own relevant task in the development process. One example of the result of this kind of co-operation is the aforementioned *Crime Santa Claus: Deja Vu* game. Also of note is that this is the only game which uses the special 128-colour mode in the two main screens. Despite this enhanced mode, the game doesn't look as nice as it does in the 30 colour Multicolour mode.

***Star Inheritance* (a.k.a. *Star Inheritance: Black Cobra,* 1995, by STEP)**

***Civilization* (1997, by Vitaly Kubeckin)**

legal copies were sold in quite low volumes... Three thousand units sold was a good result for a game in the mid 1990s



***Prince of Persia* (1996, by Magic Soft)**

Doom, Mortal Kombat, King's Bounty, Heroes of Might and Magic, and *Worms* were games that all received different versions

Demo groups also often make games. The style of their demos can be easily identifiable in the games. An example of a demo group game is Omega Hackers Group's, *Mario Islands*. Of course, the best groups only co-operated with others of the same programming abilities. For example, the graphics of *Mario Islands* were given to OHG from n-Discovery to develop further. Demo groups usually consist mostly of teenagers, or people in their early twenties. At the moment these groups are the leading figures of the Russian computing industry.

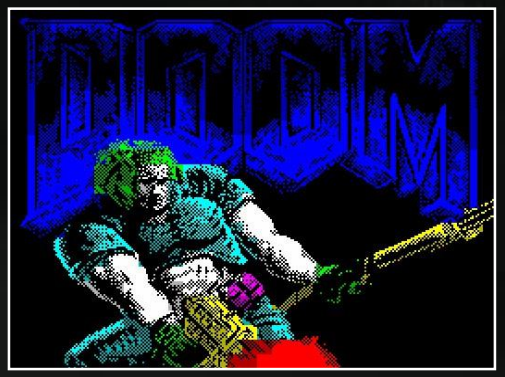
Copper Feet (a.k.a Vyacheslav Mednonogov) is one of Russia's most renowned Spectrum coders, and often co-operated with his brother, Alexej. Copper Feet also led the way in recording details of his software's development by keeping diaries of all the games he worked on with Alex Xor. These were published by the contemporary (electronic) press. Since these ancient diaries are now available on the Internet too, we can read about the circumstances of how *Black Raven 1* and *Courier 2: The Lost World* came to be.

In the eighties and nineties, one way of advertising games was diskzines. On these disks you could find works in progress of upcoming games like the previously discussed *Black Raven 2* by Copper Feet. Worthy of mention is that homebrew game developers also published diskzines to ensure that playable demos of their games would exclusively available. Some of the elite groups that released their own diskzine include: Step CG with *Spectrofon*, XL Design with *ZX Format*, Mafia with *Faultless Magazine* and Rush with *Rush Magazine*. The game demos on these magazines were not copy-protected, encouraging people who bought the diskzine to pass these demos onto their friends. The final versions of these games (if released) did contain difficult copy protection methods.

During the Spectrum's homebrew life in Russia, the same game title was often developed by two or three different groups. The final appearance of the games produced by these groups could often be quite different. For example: *Doom*, *Mortal Kombat*, *King's Bounty 1*, *3*, *Heroes of Might and Magic* and *Worms* were all games that had different versions. Often these groups became rivals as they competed against each other to see who could release the best conversion.

Sometimes very simple games are under construction for ages. The demo version of *Arcaniod* was announced on Funtop'98; however, the final version was introduced to the public at the demo party Chaos Constructions 2001. At Russian demo parties (a gathering of programmers who bring their demo software to compete in competitions), there were many work in progress games, many of which were never completed. In 2000, one complete game was developed while, in the very next year, two full versions were released. At Chaos Constructions 2004, three full versions and a demo were released. While in the process of developing games, programmers would often lose source code, and have to terminate entire projects. This meant that many games were never seen by anyone other than the people involved with the game's development...

***Courier 2: The Lost World* (2002, by Perspective Group)**



***Doom* was never completed by Digital Reality...**

***King's Bounty* (1995, by EJB)**

If you wish to track down any of the games featured in this article, then your best place to start would be World of Spectrum. WoS has a superb archive of games, including a vast catalogue of homebrew titles. You will need to have a Spectrum emulator that supports the TR-DOS Operating System, which can also be found on the WoS' emulator pages. Good hunting.

RAIDERS of the LOST ARCADES

ALIEN™ vs. PREDATOR™

Words & screenshots by **Ack**

DETAILS

Developer:	Capcom
Publisher:	Capcom
Released:	1994
Platform:	Arcade
Genre:	Beat-'em-up

Unfortunately, this would be the only release the world would ever see, as Alien Vs. Predator would never see ports to any console or computer

What could be better than playing a cyborg with a machine gun for an arm as he faces off against horde after horde of aliens designed by artist H.R. Giger? Doing it side-by-side with a Predator Warrior who's busy laying waste to the squads of Wayland Corporations' soldiers behind you, of course! *Alien vs. Predator* made its debut in arcades May 20, 1994, in Japan, USA, Europe, and Asia, and its cabinet utilized CPS-2 technology, an 8-way joystick, and a three button layout. Control was simple: the A-button fired your gun, the B-button was for attacks, and the C-button was for jumping. The game could be found configured for two or three players at a time.

Unfortunately, this would be the only release the world would ever see, as *Alien Vs. Predator* would never see ports to any console or computer, and has also not been re-released on any console service. While a Super Nintendo title with the same name would see a release a year before it by Activision, it was a completely different animal from its arcade cousin. The arcade game was also meant to tie into the plot of an *Alien Vs. Predator* film, but the movie deal fell through and the arcade was left as a standalone.

Alien Vs. Predator was a side scrolling beat-'em-up, where a few players would face off against waves of weaker enemies and navigate various traps as they progressed through the seven levels, each ending with its own much tougher boss, to finally face off against the Alien Queen. Levels would be populated with large numbers of enemies, many on screen at the same time. Enemy types ranged from various versions of aliens in various stages of development, including chest busters and face huggers, as well as soldiers serving the Wayland Corporation armed with various kinds of weapons, infected humans, and automatic gun turrets. Bosses include a Predator under Wayland control, a Power Loader (similar to one used by Ripley to defeat the Queen in the film Aliens), and, of course, an Alien Queen.

To beat them, various weapons and items strewn throughout the levels can be used, including knives, grenades, flamethrowers, pulse rifles, food to restore health, and even ammunition to grant unlimited firepower for the player's gun for nine seconds. These items can be found hidden inside crates or barrels, simply found lying about on the ground, or taken from enemies who are wielding them.

In the game, the island city of San Drad, California has been placed under quarantine after Aliens have invaded the area. The Colonial Marines are fighting inside, but they're entirely outnumbered and overrun. Major Schaefer and Lieutenant Kurosawa are in the thick of things, having realized that they're probably not going to make it out and resolved to taking as many enemies with them as they can, when a set of three Predators shows up, wipes out the oncoming Aliens, and propose they work together. Not having much choice, the two Marines agree. From here the plot has various twists and turns until the final battle, including Wayland Corporation attempting to seize Aliens for use as weapons, and a

All the great beat-'em-ups have some classic mutli-player action, and *AvP* doesn't disapoint here. Mayhem, violence, blood, guts...

Aaaargh! Zombies, or something just as equally gruesome. Get 'em off me, for gawd's sake

Each level is truncated with nice cut scenes—like this one—which advances the story, as well as adds to the atmosphere of the game

While there may be some big muffa of weapons available, nothing beats a good knuckle sandwich to the chops

Bah! You call that a gun? *This* is a gun.

With an excellent arcade game like *AvP*, you would expect some huge battles with all sorts of alien guardians, and boy, do you get them

shocking "defection" .... Story exposition is mostly done between levels, though sometimes snippets of dialogue are said in the levels, and characters will say different things depending on which characters have been selected.

There are four playable characters, two Colonial Marines and two Predators: Major Dutch Schaefer, Lieutenant Linn Kurosawa, Predator Warrior, and Predator Hunter. Each of the four characters feature unique moves and attacks, though the two predators are somewhat similar. The Predator Warrior fights with a spear while the Predator Hunter is armed with a naginata, and both use a shoulder-mounted plasma cannon, though both feature different attacks. Lt. Kurosawa is a fast, but weaker character than any of the others, and she fights with a sword and a pistol. While the likeness isn't the same, Maj. Schaefer is the only character to have come directly from the original source material, having been played by Arnold Schwarzenegger in the film *Predator*. He lost an arm in the aftermath of the film, and has since had it replaced with his current mechanical piece. Maj. Schaefer comes in as the most powerful, but also slowest, character, fighting mainly with his bare hands. His cyborg arm has a built in machine gun.

Combat is simple enough, with each character having a basic combo they can perform by hitting the attack buttons. Throws can be executed by grabbing an opponent then putting in specific commands. Characters can also use special moves for fighting off hordes of enemies that have surrounded them by pressing two buttons at the same time. Both Predators can be disarmed of their weapons, though they are still quite capable of hand-to-hand combat.

The seven levels offer no branching paths, making for a very linear fight. Locales range from city streets to a forest, to the inside of a lab. The most unique level in terms of design is the third, where players ride on the top of an APC, similar to the one found in the film *Aliens*, while it makes its way through the city streets. Player must use their weapons to unload on hordes of aliens that attempt to leap and claw at them from the road. Boss battles generally take place in a large, open area that players can move back and forth through while fighting the boss, though certain locales limit this for the fight. Backgrounds are beautifully drawn, as are all the sprites and effects used, and the game looks absolutely gorgeous. Capcom's art style would quickly become prevalent in such titles as *Dark Stalkers*, *X-Men: Children of the Atom*, and *Street Fighter Zero* (or *Street Fighter Alpha*, depending on where you come from).

Unfortunately, there is no word if this game will ever see release on anything beyond its original arcade origins. Those lucky enough to have played the game can attest to the experience. But if you haven't gotten a chance to try it, and while visiting the local arcade, or at an arcade auction or show, or even in the possession of a private collector, if you find it, play it. Rip through a horde of aliens and fight to your heart's content. You'll be glad you did.

there is no word if this game will ever see release on anything beyond its original arcade origins. Those lucky enough to have played the game can attest to the experience

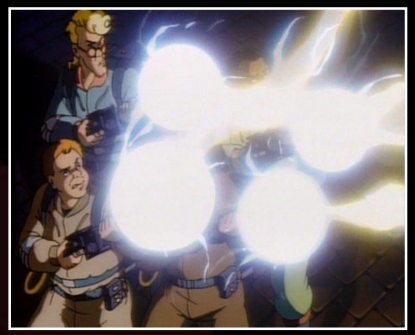
GHOSTBUSTERS

THROUGH THE AGES

Words & screenshots by
Duffman & **Neil Reive**
Theatrical promo image
© **Columbia Pictures**

With *Ghostbusters* receiving an update for the current generation of super consoles and PCs, we thought this was the perfect time to look back at where it all began: the various games, ports, remakes, spin-offs, and sequels

GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES



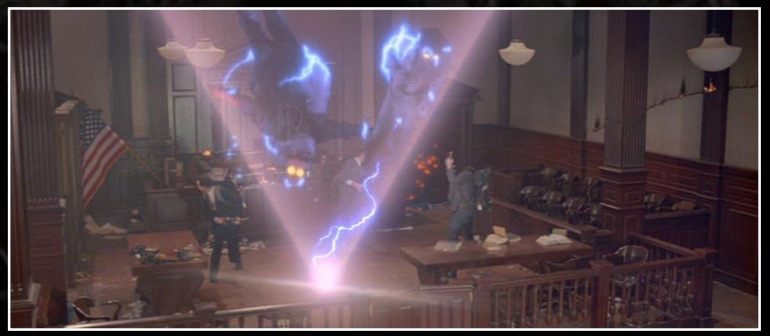
Ghostbusters is a classic with a long standing legacy. Two films, two animated TV series, the ongoing development of a third motion picture and the current next generation game are all testament to that. Released in 1984, the original film follows a group of ghost exterminators (Dr. Peter Venkman, Dr. Ray Stanz, Dr. Egon Spengler and later on Winston Zeddemore) as they establish their "ghostbusting" business and take on the spiritual ghouls of New York with hilarious consequences. With the combination of a great script, a great director, talent and actors, the sci-fi comedy film was a great critical and commercial success. *Ghostbusters* was easily one of the highest grossing motion pictures of 1984. With great success come spin-offs, sequels and video games. *Ghostbusters* was no exception. The first computer game was out barely a few months after the first film was released.

Naturally, Columbia Pictures were keen to produce a sequel to their newfound hit franchise, but due to certain disagreements within the studio, it was put on hold. Instead, *The Real Ghostbusters*, an animated television series was created in 1986 and ran up until 1991. Although this new series was based on the original film, "*The Real*" prefix was added to the show due to copyright issues over the *Ghost Busters* name. This show featured the ongoing adventures of the ghostbusting crew as they battled various familiar and unfamiliar ghostly foes.

Five years after the first film a sequel finally became a reality. *Ghostbusters II* was released in 1989 and takes place five years after the first film. The Ghostbusting business has closed due to being sued by the city over damage caused in the battles against their ghostly nemesis, Gozer. The crew have all disbanded and are making a living elsewhere. Venkman is a paranormal chat show host, Stanz is the owner of an occult book shop, Spengler carries out odd experiments in a laboratory while Zeddemore, along with Stantz, entertain children at parties. It is however, not too long before they are back into their ghostbusting ways as the ghost sightings in New York begin to rise again. Unfortunately, the film received a rather lukewarm response from critics and fans alike which is probably the reason why the third film was put into development hell.

Although a third film may have been well off the radar at the time, *The Real Ghostbusters* was followed up by another animated series, *Extreme Ghostbusters*, which aired in 1997. Set after its predecessor, the ghostbusters lack of work has caused them to all go their own ways. Dr. Egon Spengler stayed behind to watch over the 'containment field'. Later when ghosts start to reappear Spengler brings in the help of his four young students.

A third film in the franchise has been rumoured for over a decade and has yet to see the light of day. Dan Aykrodyd—who co-wrote and starred in the films—had recently been quoted as saying that the recent *Ghostbusters* video game "is essentially the third movie." Despite all this it now seems that there is solid evidence that there will be a third movie. The script is apparently in the works with Aykroyd, Harold Ramis and Ivan Reitman all having an input. The plot—which logically must be set some time after the second film—is said to revolve around the original ghostbusting team training a group of young Ghostbusters (which consist of men and women sporting new equipment). With the resurgence of the franchise thanks to the videogame and news of the third film, the name Ghostbusters will be around for some time to come. That's enough background waffle, let's get on with the actual games…



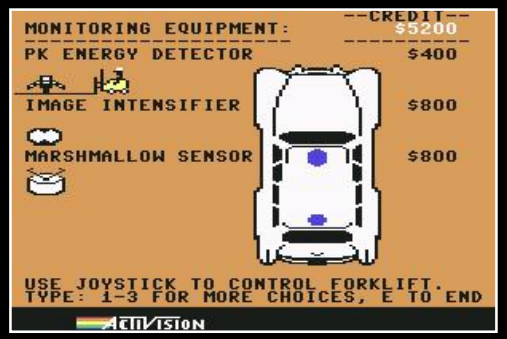
GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES

GHOSTBUSTERS

Developer: Activision
Publisher: Activision
Released: 1984
Platforms: C64, Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari 800, Atari 2600, Master System, MSX, NES, ZX Spectrum.

One of the earliest film licences to appear on 8-bit computers was the original *Ghostbusters*. Designed and programmed by David Crane and published by Activision. The game's plot is loosely based on events from the film. Controlling one of the Ghostbusters you have to rid the city of all ghosts and keep the psychokinetic (PK) levels as low as possible.

You begin with a set amount of money and have to set up the business. You have to purchase a vehicle and ghostbusting equipment: PK Energy Detector, Image Intensifier, Marshmallow Sensor, ghost bait, traps, and ghost vacuum. All these items have their own price and you don't have enough cash to buy everything. Careful consideration is needed.



Spend the money wisely when tooling up. (C64)

We got one. He be slow, we be fast... (C64)

It's then onto the main map of New York where most of the gameplay takes place. The map details the buildings in the surrounding area and the "Spook Central" apartments where Zuul's Temple is marked. If one of the buildings begins to flash then that's your cue to go and do some ghostbusting, earning some money at the same time. The object of the game is to cleanse the buildings of ghosts and suck up roamers, which are trying to make their way to the temple of Zuul. From the map, a route may be selected and then the screen cuts to an overhead view of your vehicle on the road. Roamer ghosts can be sucked up by pressing the vacuum activation at the right moment.

Once you reach the haunted building the screen then cuts to a side view of the building. Using your two Ghostbusters, it's time to get to work. Traps must be laid and followed up with the use of proton pack lasers. Aim the beams to trap the ghost without letting the beams cross over, as this will kill off one of your team. Catch the ghost and you get paid but if it gets away then this will affect the psychokinetic levels.

It's a good idea to catch as many ghosts on your travels. (C64)

When the PK reading rises too high a Marshmallow Man alert will sound and you have to deal with it or he will mash over several buildings. If he escapes from your efforts then the city and your rating will suffer. Scoring is achieved in two ways: for every ghost you catch you get paid a set amount ($100) of money. Trapping a Marshmallow Man will net a bigger bonus ($2,000).

The more ghosts you capture the higher your credit rating goes. The game ends when the Gatekeeper and Keymaster join forces at the Temple of Zuul. If this happens it means that you will not have earned more money that you started with or you do have sufficient credit but fail to sneak two ghostbusters into the entrance of Zuul.

Try to prevent Mr Stay-Puft from appearing. He's lethal. (C64)

The C64 version features some fine graphics, a great soundtrack—which includes the *Ghostbusters* theme—and even speech. Although the game received a mixed response from the gaming press it went on to become one of the best sellers at the time, paving the way for future film licence games.

The Amstrad CPC, Atari 2600, Sega Master System and NES versions are all very similar to the C64 version with just minor design, graphical and sonic differences. The Spectrum 48K version does have sound and the *Ghostbusters* theme at the beginning of the game but this is all really. Oddly enough because there is no continuous soundtrack, the game seems to lack something. The 128K version *does* feature the rousing movie soundtrack throughout and is an altogether more pleasing version.

The C64 version features some fine graphics, a great soundtrack—which includes the theme tune—and even speech

THE REAL GHOSTBUSTERS

The game features some decent gameplay, coupled with some fine visuals, but it is even better when played with a second player

Developer: Data East
(ports: Activision)
Publisher: Data East
(ports: Activision)
Released: 1987
Platforms: Arcade
(ports: Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, C64, Game Boy, ZX Spectrum)

With the first film still fresh in people's minds and *The Real Ghostbusters* currently showing on television it seemed only natural to produce a game based on the animated series as well.

You can enter the levels in either single player or two player mode. The object is to destroy as many of the various spirits as possible while you make your way to the end of the ten levels to face up against the wrath of a guardian ghost. Destroy the guardian ghost and he drops a key allowing you to enter the next stage.

There are a whole range of undead creatures just waiting to welcome you as one of their number. In your defense you have a gun and an unlimited supply of ammunition. Shooting the various ghouls and undead creatures merely destroys their bodies. If you want to trap their souls forever (and score lots of points) then you have to use your proton beam. This weapon (which has a limited fuel supply shown by a decreasing energy bar) sucks up the last trace of any spectre.

Each level has to be completed within a very strict time limit otherwise one of your five lives is lost. There are various items that can be picked up en route to help your cause. Carried by spooks, hidden under oil drums or protected by circles of rising and falling spikes you pick up bonuses that increase your firepower. You can also recharge your proton beam, get a temporary coat of invulnerability or enlist the help of a friendly Slimer who whizzes round your head killing off everything it touches.

The game features some decent gameplay coupled with some fine visuals. The game is even better when played with a second player.

The C64 version is pretty poor with some blocky graphics and frustrating multi-load. The only saving grace is the faihtful title theme.

The Speccy game sports refreshingly excellent visuals. Graphically the game couldn't be better, ghosts, backgrounds, characters and they are all beautifully drawn and animated. There are tons of colors on the screen and hardly any color clash at all. Of course all those wonderful levels mean a lot of multi-load from the cassette tape.

Amstrad CPC users got a mashed game. While the scrolling sprites and animation were fine, the colours used negated this good work. The sound is spot on but the gameplay is a slight letdown with poor collision detection.

Strangely, the 16-bit versions (Amiga and Atari ST) were big disappointments with unimpressive graphics and gameplay making a decidedly poor effect all round.

The Gameboy version is a completely different game to the others and involves working through puzzle like levels. The proton pack isn't used to shoot ghosts but rather to move blocks.

Two player mayhem in *The Real Ghostbusters.*

End of level ghoul. Just try and keep your distance.

"Don't move. It won't hurt you."

GHOSTBUSTERS II

Developer: Activision (Home computer versions)
Dynamix (DOS)
Imagineering Inc. (NES)
Publisher: Activision
Released: 1989
Platforms: Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, C64, DOS, NES, ZX Spectrum

Following the trend of film tie-ins at the time *Ghostbusters II* takes three scenes from the film, works them into sub games and arranges them one after the other. Things pick up once the first level is loaded. At the bottom of a deep shaft beneath the city streets runs a river of slime. The goal is to retrieve a sample for analysis. Your fellow Ghostbusters lower you on a winch while an assortment of spooks give you a hard time. There are three parts of a scoop the need to be collected, all of which are located within the shaft. Swinging from side to side you have to align your feet with each scoop component to pick it up. Energy and weapon refills can also be found along the way.

For level two the Statue of Liberty has come to life and is stomping down Broadway on its way to the Museum of Art. The outbreak of ghouls is a serious danger to the statue's health so you have to protect her from the attacks. You control a fireball from the statue's torch which itself can shoot smaller fire balls at the enemy. Each fire ball is limited in power and once you've drained one another must be created. This takes its toll on the statue's energy level. Energy can be topped up by sending the crowd on the street to pick up slime from dead ghosts. The fact that the fire balls run out proves to be an irritating one. Your control of the ball is much like that of a spaceship in a conventional shoot-'em-up.

Level one: probably the hardest level of the lot. (CPC)

The third and final sub-game (set in the isometrically-viewed museum) gives you the task of rescuing Oscar the baby and destroying Vigo the Carpathian. To return to Earth, Vigo's ghost has to enter the body of a baby. That baby happens to be Oscar. Vigo is drawing power from Oscar who has been placed in front of his painting. You have to abseil down into the gallery with each ghostbuster then select each one to carry out a task: grab the baby and hide it, kill Janosz and finally another two to zap Vigo when he emerges.

Some pretty impressive digitised cut scenes. (CPC)

The 16-bit versions have superb graphics and sound (there are some great digitised sound effects and of course that trademark title theme. The 8-bit versions while all varying in aesthetics play the same as each other. The Amstrad CPC version has some outstanding graphics with some bright, colourful sprites and backdrops. Sound is also top notch with some great sound effects and the *GB* theme.

The C64 game suffers slightly when compared against the vibrant Amstrad graphics but makes up for this by producing some quality sounds. Following the colourful look of the Spectrum's *The Real Ghostbusters* game, Speccy's *GBII* has a rather disappointingly drab colour palette despite it being perfectly playable none-the-less. Sound and gameplay are more or less the same as the other 8-bitters. All versions do play the same however the game lacks any elements to give it any real staying power. This brings the game down somewhat.

Shoot out at the OK courthouse. (DOS)

The DOS version plays very different to the other home computer versions. While it does feature similar locales to Activision's own game, Dynamix decided to feature some action scenes based on the courtroom sequence, a construction site, the shopping mall, a Van Horne Station and a driving level where you steer the Statue of Liberty.

As with the DOS version, the NES version too is different from the other home computer versions. Here we have a single-player side-scrolling run-'n'-gun affair where you ontrol one ghostbuster through various, frustratingly difficult, levels based on the film.

"Listen... Do you smell something?" (NES)

All versions play the same, however, and the limited lasting appeal brings the game down somewhat

GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES

GHOSTBUSTERS (Mega Drive)

Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega
Released: 1990
Platform: Mega Drive / Genesis

The game's cut scenes set off the atmosphere very well, and the typically manga style visuals are well detailed and colourful

While this Mega Drive game shares the same name as the first film it is not based on its plot or the related games. Instead, the MD *Ghostbusters*' plot could be considered as a continuation of the first film. The Ghostbusters are experiencing their quietest period of work since they started business until ghost activity begins to pick up. The ˜busters are called in to deal with paranormal activity in a NYC tower block.

Taking control of one of the three available Ghostbusters: Ray Stantz, Peter Venkman, or Egon Spengler (we can only assume Winston must have left after the recent drought of work) you head off to the first scene. Each character has their own strengths and weaknesses; Pete has normal speed and endurance, Ray is slow with high endurance, while Egon is fast with low endurance. This gives the game a slight strategic element to it. Will you play it safe with Ray's high endurance? Race through with Egon's speed? Or will you find a nice middle ground with Pete?

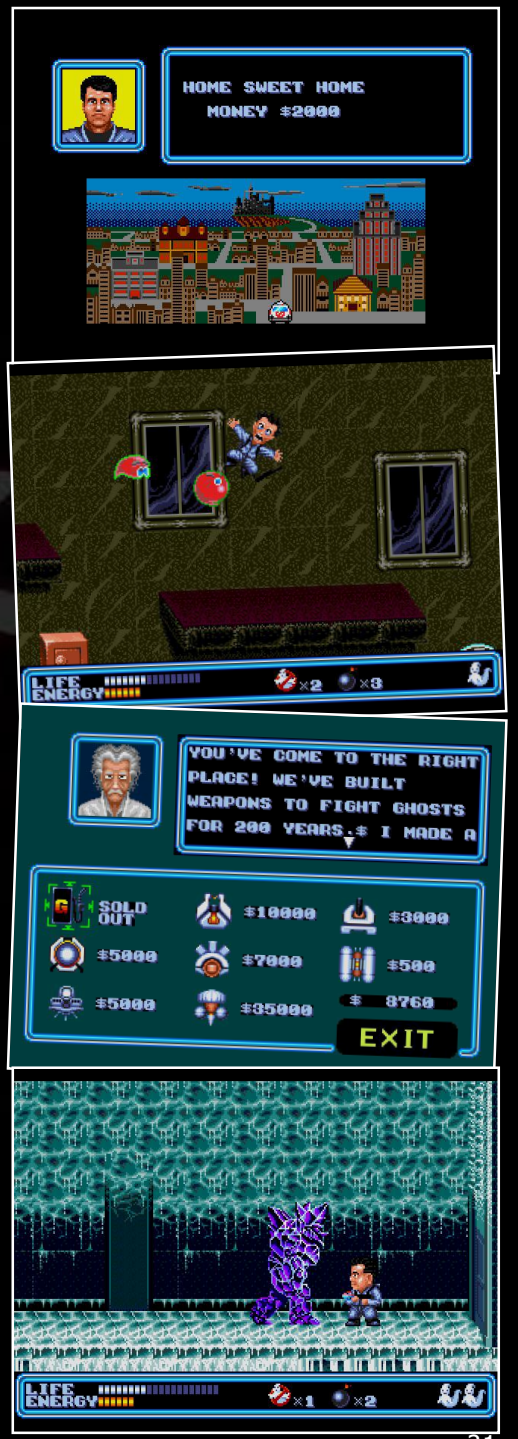
The object of the game is to clear each level by catching rogue ghosts, ghouls and other paranormal entities. For each entity captured you earn cash rewards which can be used to buy more equipment and weapons. The buildings all have their hazards such as flaming floors, icy pools, flying tables and falling chandeliers. The 'busters can crouch, jump and fire to get through the many ghoul infested scenarios. The levels contain a mid-level guardian which can be grabbed with a proton beam and captured in a ghost trap. Trickier than it sounds as the ghost, as you'd expect, doesn't co-operate. Each level ends with a major baddie whose weak spot must be discovered and exploited.

The game's cut scenes create a wonderful atmosphere and the typically manga style visuals are well detailed and colourful. The sound is excellent with some fantastic spot effects and of course the title theme which is recreated perfectly. My only complaint is that the game is rather difficult, but, with patience you soon learn how to negotiate the levels. MD *Ghostbusters* is a trying but enjoyable mixture of action and exploration.

The plot doesn't follow the films, but takes its own direction

Where do these ladders go? They go up

Sega did everything in those days, even printing their own newspaper



NEW GHOSTBUSTERS II

Developer: HAL Laboratory, Inc.
Publisher: Activision
Released: 1990
Platform: NES, GameBoy

Now this is a very interesting game indeed. Sublicensed to HAL Laboratory by Activision themselves, *New Ghostbusters II* is a breath of fresh air after the disappointing "official" *Ghostbusters II* effort.

Ghosts are causing mayhem all over NYC and they need busting. Choosing two of the four Ghostbusters you enter the level (which is viewed from an overhead perspective) and chase down the ghosts. You take control of the lead Ghostbuster and use their proton pack to stun ghosts. Once stunned you can then summon the second (AI controlled) Ghostbuster to activate the trap. Once all the ghosts in the room have been captured an arrow points you to the exit door and to the next room.

Choose two 'busters, although they all have the same skills

Essentially a run-'n'-gun affair, loosely based on the film

The 16 levels consist of offices, subway mazes and trashed art museums. These are filled with nasty creepy blob ghosts, floating heads and more. The levels are based loosely on the second *Ghostbusters* film and that's probably to its benefit considering the shallow home computer versions.

If a ghost touches one of your characters they become unconscious for a moment. The game is over once you've lost all the proton pack energy or traps. Thankfully the second AI controlled Ghostbuster is immune to damage. While latching onto ghosts with your proton beam you can still move around a little while avoiding other ghosts although not *too* far as to lose them. Pausing the game brings up your score and remaining lives. Each ghost caught increases your score which can gain extra lives.

One ghoul trapped and ready to go

The games features bright and colourful visuals with the characters sporting small bodies and large heads. They are refreshingly nice to look at though and suit the game. One strange oddity however is that due to number of colour limitations Winston's character is a shade of blue.

The GameBoy version is a faithful port of the NES game with only graphical compromises and slight changes regarding cut-scenes. The game does lack variety through the levels as you're just catching ghost after ghost in room after room. Regardless of this monotony the game is designed very well and if you're a patient gamer then this will satisfy you. Strangely, the game was only released in Japan and Europe and never saw the light of day in North America.

Bust the ghosts, rescue the girl, and become a hero

The game's cut scenes set off the atmosphere very well, and the typically manga style visuals are well detailed and colourful

EXTREME GHOSTBUSTERS

Developer: Light and Shadow Production
Publisher: Light and Shadow Production
Released: 2001
Platform: GameBoy Colour

If you are a huge fan of the original film's cast and have never even seen the animated television series then you may be immediately disappointed by what's offered here. Gone are Pete Venkman, Ray Stanz and Winston Zeddmore. Instead you are presented with a new group of rookie Ghostbusters who are under the training of Egon Spengler - the only character from the original films.

A vampire ghost is causing paranormal problems downtown and it's up to your new recruits to get down there and do some busting. Controlling one of the four characters—Kylie, Garett, Roland or Eduardo—you take to the city buildings in search of ghost bats, ghouls and other anomalies. The game is designed as a traditional platform shoot-'em-up, with walls, ladders, upper ledges..

While each character has their own abilities and skills they all have the usual run, jump and shoot moves available. One particularly handy move is the 360 arc shooting that is produced while pressing fire and pressing left or right—similar to *Turrican*'s rotating laser weapon. You can also jump towards the edge of platforms and your character will hang on and pull themselves up.

The character's lifespan is shown by three bars at the bottom of the screen and if they are hit by a ghoul then one bar disappears. Proton energy is also limited, requiring an accurate shot throughout. Extra proton packs can be picked up along the way.

While the game looks and sounds adequate enough it's the little niggles that bring it down. For starters the animation of the characters is clunky and movement around upper ledges is quite treacherous as you may fall despite the fact that you were still standing on top of a solid level. If you can forgive it for it's faults and learn to play around these flaws then *Extreme Ghostbusters* can be quite enjoyable.

EXTREME GHOSTBUSTERS: ECTO-1

Developer: Magic Pockets
Publisher: Light and Shadow Production
Released: 2002
Platform: GameBoy Advance

If the Ghostbusting effort on the GameBoy Colour disappointed many then this surely more than makes up for it. Again based on the animated television series, *Extreme Ghosbtusters: Ecto-1* follows the exploits of a new group of ghostbusting heroes led by original 'buster Egon Spengler.

The game's intro details how the ghostbusting group was about to go on vacation when Garret and Roland mysteriously went missing. Following on from this mystery strange paranormal events begin filtering into the Ghostbusters HQ like a famous portrait disintegrating into a burst of screams and a city block invaded by a horde of nasty phantoms. Egon asks Eduardo and Kylie to take Ecto-1 to the scene and investigate.

The first action part of the game actually involves driving the Ecto-1 (the ghostbusters vehicle) as you travel to your destination. It's a standard bird's eye perspective of your vehicle as you speed up the road avoiding vehicles, roadblocks and other hazards. Time does tick away but with time bonus pick-ups along the way this doesn't really pose a threat. The real threat comes later when the roads becomes more and more choked-up with cars, which requires some

skilful manoeuvres to get around them.

The platform sections are the game's real meat and bones and it happens to do them quite well. Here you control either Eduardo or Kylie switching between them with a quick button press. The buildings contain many ghouls and phantoms that you have to take out, as well as bonus items and puzzles.

Gameplay is very smooth with some great arcade elements. Eduardo and Kylie can both run, jump, bomb and arc their proton gun in 360 angles (as with *EGB* on the GBC). While the car driving sections aren't exactly exciting they do their job very well by providing a nice change of pace in between all the platform level blasting.

The game is full of wonderfully colourful visuals which are faithful to the television series in every way. Great use of cut scenes are used to advance the story along with some smooth animation making this a delight to play. The soundtrack is also suitably atmospheric and spot effects are excellent throughout. A quality product and one that *GBA* fans cannot afford to miss out on.

GHOSTBUSTERS THROUGH THE AGES

GHOSTBUSTERS Remake

Developer: Trevor (Smila) Storey and Scottige
Released: 2006
Platform: PC-Windows
Weblink: Gamecard

As the game loads the credits appear over a spooky green slime background. A see-through silhouette of Slimer slowly ascends the screen followed by a pounding remix of the Ghostbusters title theme by Xentrix. This is the moment that you feel that you are about to experience a truly unique remake.

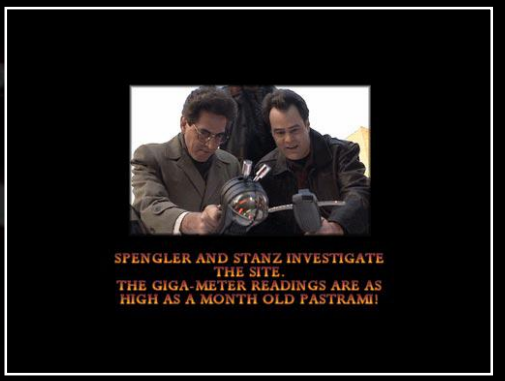
By now we all know the plot of the film and the gameplay of the original Activision game so we'll get right down to the nitty gritty. The game has been updated with some slick visuals and sounds; it is simply wonderful to look at and to listen to. The use of sampled speech here and there is an absolute joy. While the animation of the characters themselves is a little stiff they are decent enough. I would argue that this remake is even easier to play than the original version due to the smoothness of the game map.

GHOSTBUSTERS II Remake

Developer: Park Productions
Released: 2007
Platforms: PC, Mac, Linux
Weblink: Developer's website

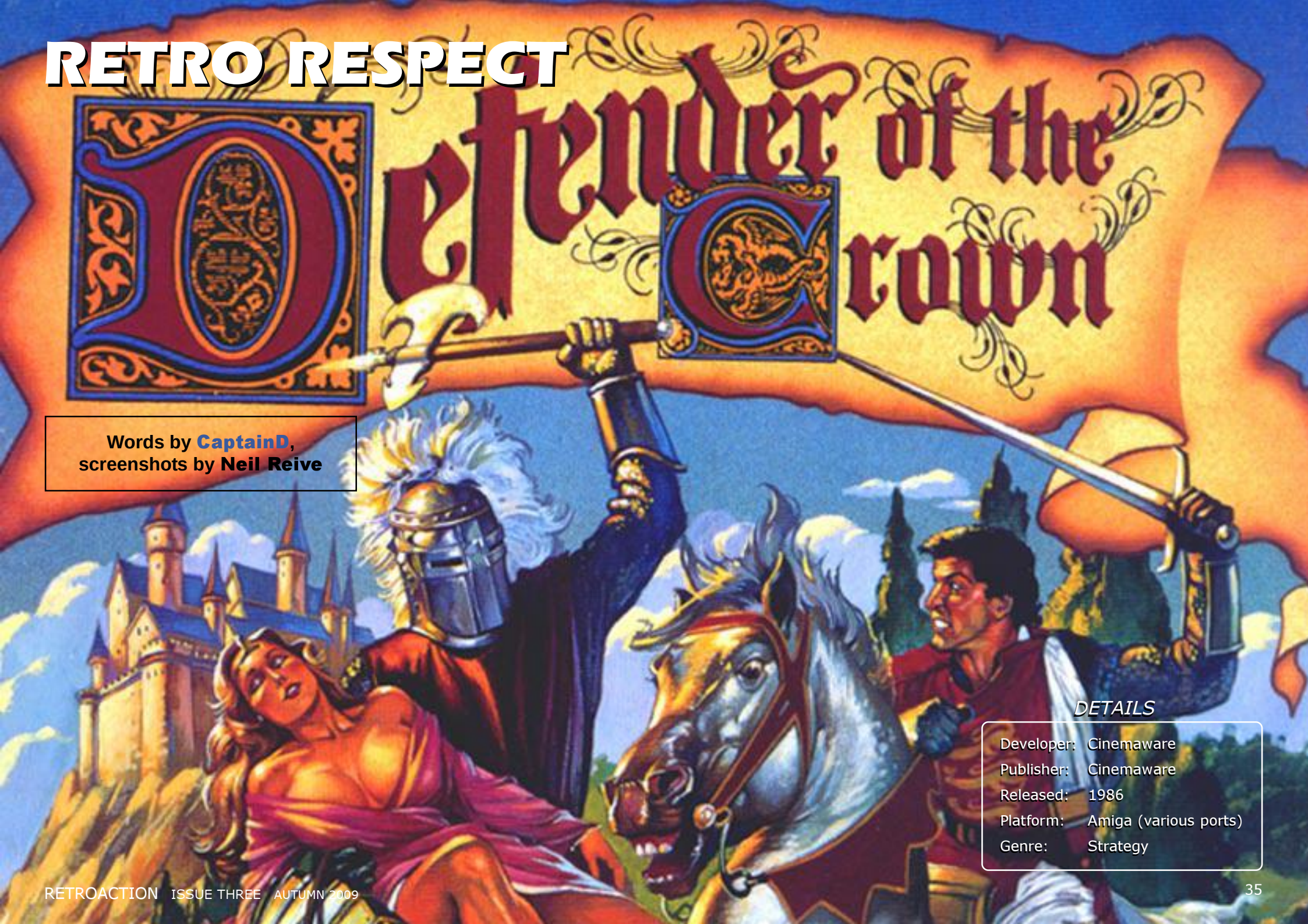
Following on from the superb *Ghosbusters* remake in 2006, the *Ghostbusters II* remake is a mixed bag. If you thought that the original game's Van Horne section was frustratingly difficult then you obviously haven't played this version. Unfortunately, it doesn't get any easier from there either.

The character graphics are fine with some great digitised profile pics of the Ghostbusters. Profiles aside, the characters are a bit stiff to move. Each level is intersected by a selection of cut scenes which advance the story before play begins again. There is also the odd use of speech and another faithful recreation of the title theme. There's no denying that the visuals and sound have clearly benefited from this update but it's a shame that the gameplay hinders all the good work done here.



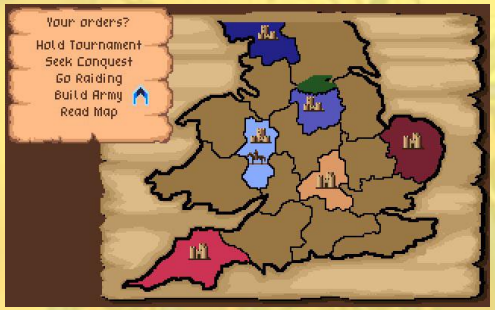
Defender of the Crown

Words by CaptainD,
screenshots by Neil Reive



DETAILS

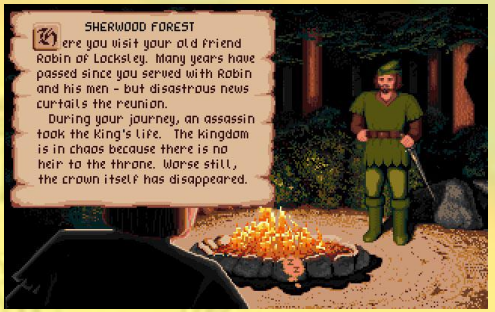
Developer:	Cinemaware
Publisher:	Cinemaware
Released:	1986
Platform:	Amiga (various ports)
Genre:	Strategy



Plan your attack and conquests from the map screen

Jousting can be over before it begins if you're not up to scratch

That's you, that is. Also shows the year, your income, and treasure


SHERWOOD FOREST
Here you visit your old friend Robin of Locksley. Many years have passed since you served with Robin and his men - but disastrous news curtails the reunion.
During your journey, an assassin took the King's life. The kingdom is in chaos because there is no heir to the throne. Worse still, the crown itself has disappeared.

The many cut scenes look great and add to the atmosphere

Defender of the Crown was Cinemaware's first game, in a landmark of videogaming for that reason and many others. Inspiring the imaginations of many game players at the time and for years afterwards, it's an irresistible combination of arcade sequences and strategy, all rolled into the heraldic atmosphere of Saxon / Norman England.

The most immediately memorable thing about *DotC* are the graphics, which were absolutely wonderful for the time—not just part of the game, but a true work of art. The astonishing visuals play a key part in taking you back to the age of heraldry and chivalry. The music too is good (even on the ST's humble Yamaha sound chip) and the game play, while often simple, is extremely compelling. The strategic planning part of the game was accessible strategy for the masses (who soon came to realise that the game was, in fact, virtually impossible unless you started the game in the right position!) and the arcade sequences are simple but fun.

Jousting is very addictive, despite the fact that few are actually good at it. Sword fighting can bring rewards in the form of money or, sometimes, an affair—perhaps even marriage and alliance with one of the other Saxon lords. Of course, anything is better than letting the nasty Normans conquer England completely... but the game can't be won unless you defeat them and unite the land. Manning the catapults becomes easy once you learn the trick to it, but bashing down those walls never really gets old. Robin Hood only has a cameo role in the original game, though *Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown* would later turn the classic game play on its head with you in the role of the man in Lincoln Green.

There are four characters to choose from: Wilfred of Ivanhoe, Wolfric the Wild, Cedric of Rotherwood, and Geoffrey Longsword. Each one has different abilities in Leadership, Jousting, and Swordplay, which leads to a slightly different game experience with each character. Although, like most self-respecting adolescent boys of the time, I couldn't possibly accept playing a hero called "Cedric"—it just wasn't right!

Although *Defender of the Crown* came out for the 8-bits as well, one thing that made this game really stand out from the crowd was in showing a generally unacquainted public just what the 16-bit machines could do. It certainly set a new standard for graphics and using cinematic techniques, which laid the groundwork for much of what modern gamers take for granted. Even though Cinemaware released some great games after this, to many—including myself—*Defender of the Crown* remains their definitive contribution to the gaming world.

This game has since been reinvented and re-envisioned, usually by Cinemaware themselves, for various systems. It just goes to show that the strong appeal of the original game and its concept is as strong as ever. Thanks to the generosity of Cinemaware putting the originals up on their site for free download. With the aid of an emulator, you can relive those glory days of saving England from those pesky Normans.

This isn't a cut scene, it's live gameplay. Just look at the shadows

The strategic planning part of the game was accessible strategy for the masses and the arcade sequences are simple but fun.

REVIEWS

RETROACTION REVIEW POLICY

There are many homebrew games released every month, never mind every few months, so how do we cover them all? The simple fact is that we can't. Plus, we don't feel that it is practical to have our writers use their valuable time by playing and reviewing bad games, just to moan about them. No, we would rather tell you about great games. So, it's unlikely that you will ever see a bad homebrew game reviewed here.

That's not to say that we will be hyping up the games that we do review, though. You won't see the likes of 98% ratings here—in my opinion, no game is worth that, not even commercial classics—but what you will see is a fair and honest opinion based on what the reviewer has played, not what they expect or want. So consider any rating of 80% and over as great. Only the truly remarkable games will ever achieve a rating of 90% or more.

DETAILS / RATINGS BOX

This is where you will find all the information and ratings on the game: developer, publisher, platform(s), download link(s), video clip(s), and genre.

Four game components are rated individually as a percentage Here's what we look for in each:
GRAPHICS: Colour, animation, scrolling, collision-detection, design, and speed.
SOUND: Music, spot effects, and speech.
GAMEPLAY: Movement, control interface, difficulty, design, and fun element.
OVERALL: What we honestly think of the game, be it praise or a good kicking.

Occasionally, a game comes along that generates a mixed response from gamers. The "Not so fast..." box is our writers' opportunity to butt in and voice their opinion on a big review.

WHAT WE'VE BEEN PLAYING THIS SEASON

NEIL: *SKIPP AND FRIENDS*

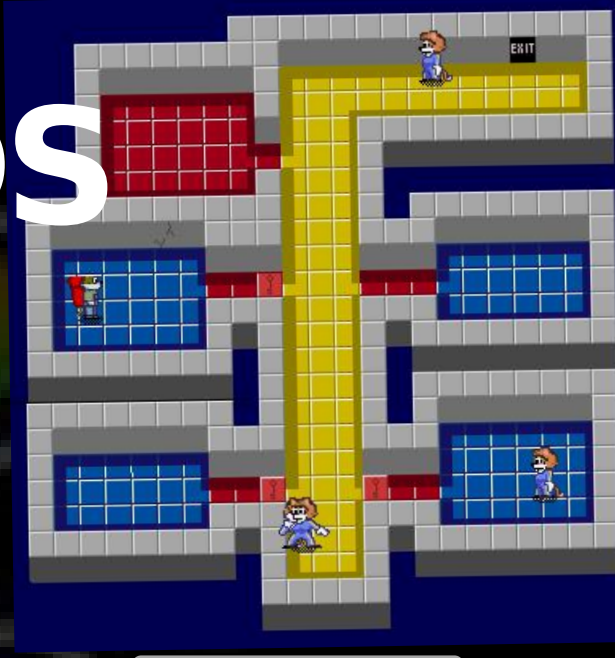
DUFFMAN: *INFECTION*

MARK: *SUDOKU MASTER*

MATTY: *GOMMY...*

38 **SKIPP AND FRIENDS** SNES
41 **KNIGHT LORE** MSX2
42 **KNIGHT 'N' GRAIL** C64
43 **KUIPER PURSUIT** ZX Spectrum
44 **R0X** Atari ST
45 **NANAKO IN CLASSIC JAPANESE MONSTER CASTLE** Amstrad CPC
46 **LA CORONA ENCANTADA** MSX, ZX Spectrum
47 **BINIAX 2** ZX Spectrum
48 **INFECTION** C64
49 **GOMMY: MEDIEVAL DEFENDER** ZX Spectrum
50 **INTERNATIONAL SOCCER** PC Windows
51 **SHIFT** MSX2
52 **LEGION OF THE DAMNED 2** C64
53 **FACTORY DAZE** ZX Spectrum
54 **KUNG FU II** PC Windows
55 **POOMANIA** GBA
56 **BERZERK REDUX** C64
57 **RAMBO** PC Windows
58 **SUDOKU MASTER** Amstrad CPC
59 **BIOHELL** ZX Spectrum

SKIPP AND FRIENDS



Words & screenshots by Neil Reive

Three happy little bunnies (Skipp, Apple and Wedge) are on a camping trip when they are suddenly abducted by nefarious astronauts and taken aboard a spaceship. It's unclear what the astronauts have in mind for them but they're not going to sit around to find out; they're going to escape from the spaceship and make their way home.

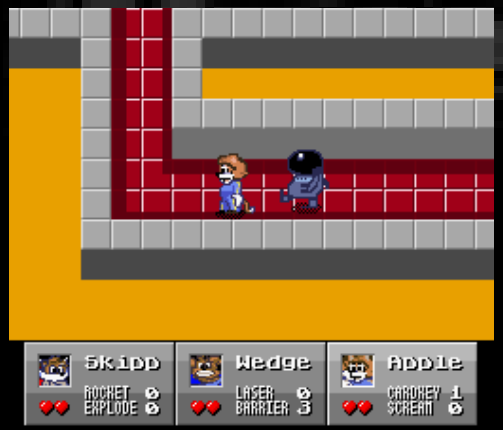
If you're familiar with the platform/puzzle game *The Lost Vikings* - which was available for various platforms in the mid-nineties - then you'll know all to well what to expect with *Skipp and Friends: Unexpected Journey.* Using the combined talents of Skipp, Apple and Wedge, you have to negotiate through the levels, solve puzzles and find the exit with all three characters alive and well.

Moving the characters around couldn't be easier: the "d-pad" controls movement, "A"/"X" makes use of a primary ability, "B"/"Y" a secondary ability, "L" switches between characters, pressing "R" and using the directional pad allows you to look around a level freely. If you prefer, you can reconfigure the controls via the emulator options.

Each character has their own special skills and abilities. Skipp has the ability to rocket propel himself across the floor and can also use explosives to take out chunks of wall. Apple can use a cardkey to open locked doors in addition to being able to scream, which stuns enemies. Wedge has a laser weapon to take out the enemy as well as a barrier to distract enemies with. The on-screen status bar will show you who has what ability and the number of times they can use it. For example, if Apple uses her cardkey talent then this will deduct one point from that ability. Careful use of abilities is required throughout.

After the successful completion of each level, a password is given which you can use at the title screen to resume the game with. This does mean that you will probably never re-play earlier levels, making the game's lifespan shorter than it could be. If you can't complete a level due to incorrect use of abilities, or something else, then you can just press "start" followed by "select" to restart the level.

I had a great time playing this game and I'm sure everyone else will too. *Skipp and Friends* had me glued to the screen and it's had my attention more than any other game in the past few months. The game also won the recent PDROMS coding competition (see our news section for the full story). This truly is a game for anyone who is looking for something a little different, or truly excellent.



Watch out for that evil astronauts, Apple

Hurrah! We've got to the exit

DETAILS

Developer: Mukunda Johnson, Ken Snyder, Steven Velema, Hubert Lamontagne

Platform: SNES

Weblink: Direct Download

Emulator: ZSNES

Genre: Puzzle

RATINGS

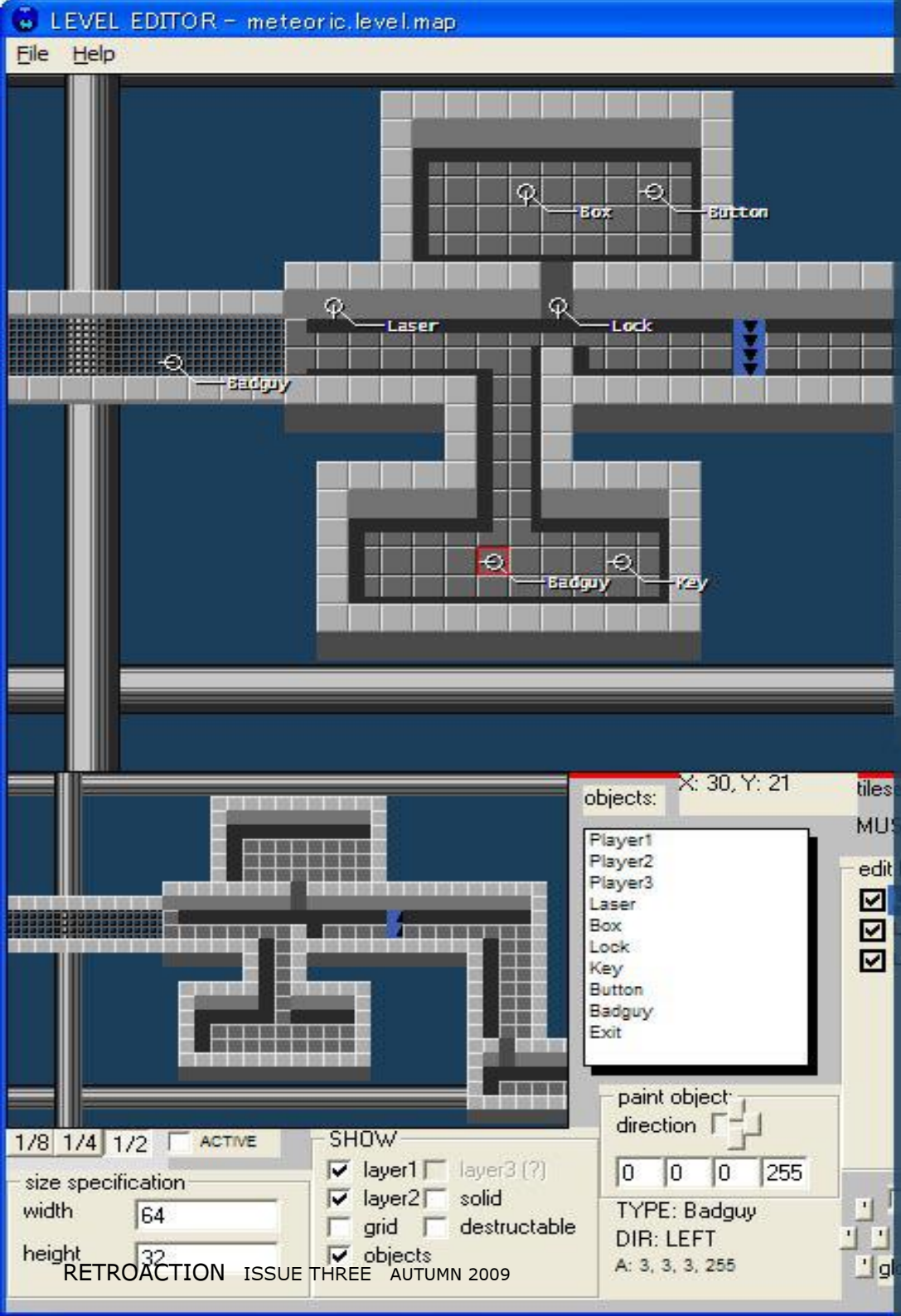
Graphics: 90%

Sound: 89%

Gameplay: 92%

Overall: 91%

Action, puzzles, humour—it has the lot



MUKUNDA AND FRIENDS

Having experienced the excellent SNES game *Skipp and Friends*, we felt it was appropriate to have a few words with the main man behind it all

Retroaction: Please tell us a little about yourself and your previous game developments.
Mukunda Johnson: I'm someone from Texas who is somehow in India now. I'm 19 years old now with still too much to learn about computers and programming. I made a few games before *Skipp and Friends*; a notable one is a GBA game called *Super Wings* (mukundazone.com), which was entered in the PDROMS compo last year, and also won first place. I think *Super Wings* turned out even better than this one. It was also my first game to have a musical soundtrack.

How did the *Skipp and Friends: Unexpected Journey* game come about? What made you decide to develop it for the SNES?
The project was inspired by a game Hubert Lamontagne wrote for the Megazeux system (there is a link to it on my blog). I'm not really sure why I chose the SNES. I guess inside I was kind of craving to do some more SNES development.

There were three other guys involved with the game. Who did what and how did it all come together?
Hubert Lamontagne gave me the concept for the game, drew the characters, and helped create the music for the game. Steven Velema wrote most of the music and helped get the sound effects together. Ken Snyder made the "level complete" and "failure" fanfare and also animated the characters for me. If it weren't for

Ken doing the animation on the last day, the characters probably would have still been stickmen (smiles).

What kind of software/ hardware was used to develop *Skipp and Friends: Unexpected Journey*?
I used the cc65 toolkit for assembling and linking 65816 (SNES CPU) code, TASM (table-driven assembler) to assemble SPC700 code (music player!), Visual Basic 6.0 to create the level editor, and a bit of Visual C++ to create the music conversion program. I have a flash-cartridge from Tototek that I used to test the game on my SNES.

How long was the development period? Were there any problems during the process?
The development period was about 5-6 weeks. The main problem was trying to find a concept. I'm not experienced at all with making puzzle games. I went through a bunch of ideas but none of them seemed worth developing further. Thankfully, Hubert Lamontagne gave me the idea of "*The Lost Vikings*" type of game.

Was there any time during the game's production that you thought "hey, this could be released on cartridge and sold to the public like the Mega Drive/Genesis games *Beggar Prince* and *Legend of Wukong*."
Hmm, not really. I didn't/don't really consider it a quality game enough to be worth the struggle of selling it. I usually don't continue developing my games after the competition is over. I think my time is better spent learning new things.

Has there been any interesting feedback on *Skipp and Friends: Unexpected Journey*, or, indeed, any of your other games?
Mostly just people being impressed, I guess. I haven't seen any interesting articles yet. Last year, Joystiq had an article about *Super Wings*, and also listed it in its "2008's best homebrew" thingy.

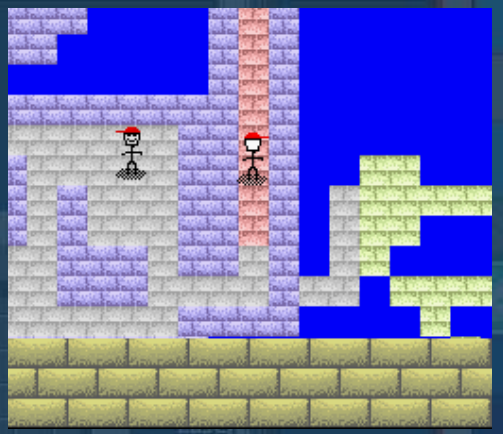
What's next? Are there any other game projects in the pipeline?
I mostly find my inspiration whenever there is a competition starting. So basically I just have a random decision whether to develop something or not. I do have a couple unfinished PC games that I'd like to complete, but I'm not sure if I ever will.

Is there any advice that you can give to other budding developers out there?
Yeah, get some sunshine once in a while (smiles).

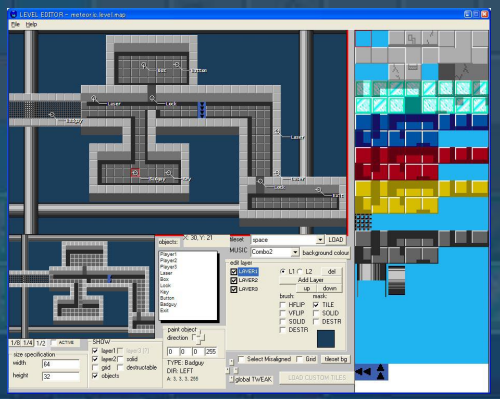
Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
I'd like to thank all of the people at #mod_shrine who certainly helped out with creating *Skipp and Friends* but somehow didn't make it in the credits.

Mukunda developed *Super Wings* on the Game Boy Advance, which also won the PDROMS.de coding competition last year

The Lost Vikings*: the main inspiration behind the concept of *Skipp and Friends



A Work-In-Progress build showing the early form of match stick men for the characters



One of the development tools used to create the *Skipp and Friends* level design

Skipp and Friends: Unexpected Journey is available to download from either Mukunda Johnson's website (mukundazone.com/) or from the PDROM.de site (www.pdroms.de/files/2175/). *Super Wings*, as well as Mukunda's other projects, are also available from Mukunda Zone.

Thanks to Mukunda Johnson for allowing us use of the *Skipp and Friends* development images.

KNIGHT LORE

Words & screenshots by Duffman

Sabreman has been cursed and has to contend with the depressing fact that at every sundown he transforms into a "wulf" until sunrise. But that's nothing, because if he fails to find a cure within 40 days he will become a "wulf" forever. Saberman's only hope is to travel to "Knight Lore" castle in search of the aging wizard Melkhior who holds the cure to his curse. The route to Knight Lore is beset with dangers though and it will take great skill to make it through to the end.

The original *Knight Lore* is considered by many to be a true classic game. *Knight Lore* was the first of it's kind to use the then revolutionary isometric perspective. Developed and released by Ultimate Play the Game on the Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, MSX and the BBC in 1984, we now have an MSX2 remake courtesy of Retroworks. As with the original game the remake has you controlling Sabreman as he treks through *Knight Lore's* isometric world searching for ingredients to the magic potion that he must take to Melkhior.

Each room is a different screen depicting a part of the castle. Each room is displayed in marvelous, colourful 3D. Many of these rooms are booby-trapped or have devious puzzles which must be dealt with before you can progress. Solving the puzzles involves using the surrounding items. For example, if there's a platform that you can't quite reach, there may be a table or chair nearby that you can push into position to aid the jump. On the other hand, you could drop one of the objects you're carrying and stand on it. There are also lots of dangers like spikes, guards, ghosts, bouncing balls and sinking paving stones to contend with. There is also the problem that you have a 40 day time limit and each night you change into a "wulf". Although you can still play the game in "wulf" form, it does make it slightly harder to avoid enemies.

This slickly packaged update features superb visuals and such features improvements as: different palettes for day/night, an in game map that shows locations visited, improved music, torch animation and much more. *Knight Lore* has a huge playing area with some diabolical puzzles to test the mind. Fans of the original will not be disappointed.

Many obstacles are encountered, some are easy to overcome while others require some thought

Mmm, I spy a crystal ball. How can I reach it, And being a "wulf" and all?

It's not a good idea to get in the way of spiked balls. I did, several times. It's not pretty

DETAILS

Developer:	RetroWorks
Platform:	MSX2
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	BlueMSX
Genre:	Arcade Adventure

RATINGS

Graphics:	92%
Sound:	80%
Gameplay:	84%
Overall:	**85%**

A good old fashioned hard nosed adventure game

KNIGHT 'N' GRAIL

Words & screenshots by Neil Reive

An evil curse descended upon a knight and his loved one. In a flash she was taken away. Vowing to rescue her from her predicament the knight seeks help from an archmage so that he can wield both a sword and armour. The only catch is that he has to retrieve the "vessel of restoration", the very same goblet that will help return his love to her true self.

You control the knight through his mission and, with his rather large sword, have to traverse through the different areas moving left, right, up, or down. Along the way the knight will have to overcome all manner of beasts and enemies. The knight has an energy bar which is depleted bit by bit as he is hit. This can be replenished by picking up extra energy power-ups that can be found throughout the game.

The knight is armed with a limitless supply of swords—which conveniently return just like a boomerang—that you can throw horizontally or diagonally to dispatch foes. You can also take evasive action when necessary by jumping, ducking or climbing out of harms way.

But it's not all about fighting and avoiding enemies. The game is full of clever little puzzles and obstacles which must be negotiated successfully. Along the way you will encounter numerous rhyming rune stones that give clues to the mission at hand. There are weapon power-ups that can be obtained. Each power-up grants you with a different attack method. Doorways to further sections are not always open and those that aren't require the destruction of a post or the turn of a switch.

While dragon heads (that shoot at you out from the sides of walls) and spitting snakes (that crawl along the castle floors) are the first enemies you'll encounter, the real danger comes from each enormous guardian monsters. It is here that your skills will be put to the test so you'd better have an agile knight who is quick on the draw.

The first thing that strikes you about *Knight "n" Grail* is its truly stunning appearance. The use of dark, foreboding colour helps give the games lands a true touch of mystery, creating plenty of atmosphere. The lighting effects of the torches hung on the walls are especially impressive. The main knight sprite moves around smoothly, making him a joy to control, and you soon find yourself leaping around and climbing ladders with ease. The sterling work done on the visuals is matched with a brilliantly moody soundtrack which makes good use of the C64"s capabilities. The sound effects are spot on with their accuracy.

Quality is apparent in every aspect of *Knight "n" Grail* although you won't have much opportunity to appreciate this when in the thick of the action. Not only do your reactions get a real workout but the puzzles add great depth that requires a bit of thought as well.

The standard weapon is the sword that flies straight ahead. Luckily, it returns back like a boomerang

There are the occasional puzzles and obstacles to negotiate too

DETAILS

Developer:	Wide Pixel Games
Publisher:	Psytronik Software
Platform:	C64
Weblink:	Gamecard
Price:	Deluxe Disk £12.99 Budget Disk £ 8.99 Download £ 1.99
Genre:	Platform Adventure

RATINGS

Graphics:	94%
Sound:	92%
Gameplay:	90%
Overall:	**91%**

Looks, sounds, and is, brilliant.

KUIPER PURSUIT

Words by Matty, screenshots by Duffman

Jonathan Cauldwell's new title *Kuiper Pursuit* is quite a departure from the usual platformers and scrolling arcade games he produces. There is however a familiar twist from the darling of the modern ZX Spectrum indie scene. Shortly before the game was released, Cauldwell announced on the World of Spectrum forums that he was working on a game using a 3D technique he'd developed which would be a great deal less sophisticated than most of his games. The game was quote by Cauldwell as being "a deliberately simplistic affair. Pick it up, play it, put it down". *Kuiper Pursuit* was the game in question. Guess what? He was right.

Now, some of you reading this might already be feeling prejudices against it and if so shame on you! Some of the best games ever written are simplistic—*Robotron,* for instance, or *Pac-Man*—so let's not hold that against it. What matters, rather the *only* thing that really matters when we're talking about videogames is whether they are fun to play and how long they keep being fun to play.

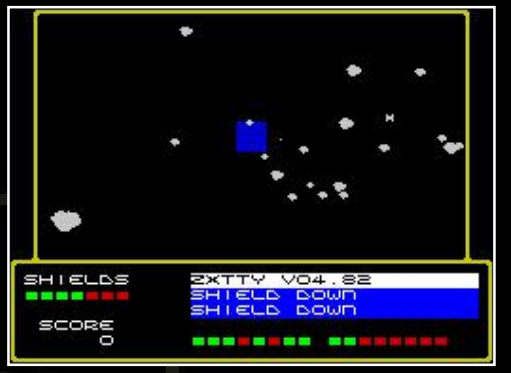
There's a teeny-tiny bit of plot to explain what the hell is going on. British space-ace Winston Spalding spots some enemy fighters (nationality/home planet unknown) massing in the Kuiper Belt whilst he's on a routine patrol around the edge of the solar system and, assuming that they're planning some sort of attack, flies into the belt to take them down.

When you load the game up (following an excellent piece of title music by Yerzmyey) you are faced with a "3D" into-the-screen view showing numerous rocks which start flying towards you as your speeds up. A square blue box in the centre of the screen acts as a sort-of crosshair indicating the direction the ship is both travelling and shooting in. There are bars for the amount of shield power the ship has and for how warm the ships lasers are (fire them continuously and they overheat and need to cool down before they can fire again). An indicator displays the current score and a box on the right hand side of the screen relays messages to you based on what's happening. That's it. This is an uncluttered display for a simple, uncluttered game.

As for the gameplay itself, this is rather like *3D Deathchase* only with up and down as well as side-to-side movement to contend with. There isn't total freedom of movement however since the ship is only able to go a certain distance in each direction (re-enforcing the idea that this is a long, thin asteroid belt rather than some kind of cloud of stones). Why Spalding's ship can't leave the belt isn't explained but perhaps it's his suicidal dedication to duty. There's also no control over the velocity—the ship boosts itself up to speed automatically and the player's task is to dodge the asteroids which come hurtling towards them and to shoot the enemy ships (two at a time) as Spalding chases them through the deadly space-boulders.

That's about it really. Unlike *Deathchase* there don't seem to be any levels or any sorts of bonuses. When shot, the enemy ships simply replace themselves. Whilst this game is quite challenging and fun for a bit, it soon gets repetitive and is crying out for a few extra features to add something to the gameplay and keep things interesting. Simple games are all very well but this is a little *too* simple—it needs something at least equivalent to *Pacman*'s fruit bonuses or *Robotron*'s last human family to make things a bit more interesting.

Not that there isn't much to enjoy here—the 3D technique is effective and very fast. Another nice touch is that enemy ships sometimes appear from *behind* the player (we never saw that in *Deathchase*!). There's the frustrating sense here that *Kuiper Pursuit* needed only a little more work before it was worthy of joining the ranks of its prolific developer's other titles. Sadly, Cauldwell has said that he has little intention of developing the game or even the 3D technique any further. This is probably as far down the road this game is ever going to get. And that's, as I'm sure Winston Spalding might say, a bally shame.



DETAILS

Developer:	Jonathan Cauldwell
Platform:	ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZX Spin
Genre:	Shoot-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	62%
Sound:	75%
Gameplay:	61%
Overall:	**57%**

Worth a shot, but this could have been so, so much better

R0X

Words & screenshots by Duffman

The crew of a military ship are on their voyage back home from a successful mission when disaster strikes. Someone had left the holo-projection unit running a "skin-flick"movie on loop while they were all in stasis. This was bad news; not only was there no one there to enjoy the movie, more importantly this had left the ship's batteries drained after a few thousand years of constant energy drain. So the ever efficient onboard computer followed standard protocol and jettisoned all non-expendable crew members, leaving only Commander Perez alone. Perez awakes from his deep sleep in uncharted space, alone and about to hit a massive meteor storm.

The development of *r0x* actually goes back to the beginning of 2008 when two coders (Heavy Stylus and El-Tel) began a joint project on the Atari STE. The idea was to use Deluxe Galaga as inspiration for the game. However, El-Tel had to leave the project and development came to a halt. Thankfully help came in the form of TomChi and together he and Heavy Stylus finished the game, winning at the Outline 2009 demoparty event held May of this year.

Now, I know what you're thinking—especially looking at the screenshots; *r0x* is a shoot-'em-up? Well, no. While *r0x* still requires skill and nerves of steel to navigate the levels, what we have here is basically a survival and rescue mission. You need to fly your ship through space, avoiding *r0x* (fragments of rock speeding through space), while rescuing fellow crew members who are floating around surviving by their spacesuits only. There are also treasures to be found and bonuses to be picked up along the way, giving bombs and extra lives.

The r0x and obstacles start to fly by at warp speed as the end of level approaches. Whoooosh!

Kaboom! A quick press of the fire button and a bomb blasts everything on screen

There is a handy on-screen display which shows how long the current r0x wave is, your current score, smart bombs available, ships that you have, and any EXTRA letters that you have. Collect the whole set of letters and you will gain an extra life. Smart bombs are limited and are used only in clearing away the screen in crisis situations. Additionally there's a two player Battle Mode where you square off against another player in an effort to rescue 20 floating crewmen.

We certainly don't see a lot of homebrew games on the ST—certainly not in the last year or so anyway—so it was a joy to hear of *r0x*. The only thing that worried me was that whenever I am greatly anticipating something, I am usually disappointed. Not so here. *r0x* is a fantastic game and is something so refreshingly different from what we are used to seeing here at *Retroaction*. With fantastic visuals, sound and gameplay *r0x* amounts to a professionally produced package that I whole-heartedly recommend all retrogamers play. Absolutely brilliant.

Two player mode shenanigans always help a game's lasting appeal

DETAILS

Developer: Heavy Stylus (RGCD) & TomChi (NoExtra)

Platform: Atari STe

Weblink: Gamecard

Emulator: STEEM

Genre: Arcade Adventure

RATINGS

Graphics:	93%
Sound:	92%
Gameplay:	88%
Overall:	**89%**

An all round excellent game of survival and rescue

NANAKO IN CLASSIC JAPANESE MONSTER CASTLE

Words & screenshots by Duffman

Having been available on the Spectrum for at least a year, *Nanako in Classic Japanese Monster Castle* finally makes it to the Amstrad CPC thanks to The Mojon Twins. The story involves Nanako's younger sister, Mya, who has got herself into a bit of bother involving dark magic and the Heun Tower. The evil that resides in the evil tower wasn't too happy with Mya and blocked her attempts to leave the tower. Consequently she took refuge in the top of the tower, 25 levels up. Naturally Nanako became very concerned of her sister's whereabouts and tracked her down to the Heun Tower where she begins her effort to rescue Mya.

You, the player, control Nanako (who has become The Mojon Twins' favourite gaming character) as she ascends the levels of the tower, ever closer to rescuing her sister. Each level requires you to jump, build boxes to climb onto or use the heads of your enemies to climb higher. Nanako can lift and drop boxes around so that they build steps to higher levels.

The enemies consist of various types of Karakasa—robot type drones that patrol back and forth on certain platforms on each level. The Karakasa are deadly to the touch, although when they freeze they can be used as a step-up to higher platforms. Some advanced techniques—like dropping a box in mid air—are vital in reaching the higher platforms. Timing jumps are equally important.

All this intricacy and precision jumping can get quite frustrating. Thankfully a password is given after the successful completion of each level. This makes returning to the game easier to handle. Despite the precision jumping required, the game does play very well. This means that the mistakes you make along your way can only be attributed to your own actions (or non-actions). The graphics are colourful and detailed. Everything moves around smoothly. Sound, while nothing exciting, is nevertheless adequate for the game.

Another solid game from The Mojon Twins. I'm beginning to wonder how long they can keep up this run of great releases. It goes without saying that I'm looking forward to their future games.

Nearly there now, just watch out for that Karakasa

Need to build a block of steps to get by this bit

The leaning tower of pizza boxes it may be, but it's your only way up

DETAILS

Developer:	The Mojon Twins
Platform:	Amstrad CPC
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Platform/Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	89%
Sound:	85%
Gameplay:	84%
Overall:	**84%**

A fine platform / puzzle hybrid.

LA CORONA ENCANTADA

Words & screenshots by Duffman

There's an old legend that Kings of the old country of Hyoth wore special crowns that gave them power to reign over the land. The evil Royal Advisor ordered one of his servants to steal such a crown and, ignoring warnings, put the crown on his head. As soon as the crown was placed onto the head of such an unworthy wearer a terrible curse was unleashed onto the kingdom. The result was that the fool servant was transformed into golden coins and the future Queen was frozen in ice. Only by retrieving all 20 coins can you gain access to the Royal Advisor, who has the crown and the key to your fiancée's freedom.

La Corona Encantada was originally developed for the MSXDev08 competition by the Karoshi Corporation, coming third overall but winning the individual awards "Game with the Best Music" and "Game with Better Gameplay". The game was later updated into a version which could be purchased in the form of an MSX cartridge. The Speccy port was also included on a special mini-CD with extra material. Now, we have the updated, final, final MSX version available to download for free.

La Corona Encantada is a classic platform game where the player needs to travel across various levels to retrieve 20 golden coins, all the while avoiding the numerous enemies and obstacles. One thing that you will have to master is jumping. This is essential because your character will need to reach upper platforms to progress. Levers can also be used to gain access to other areas so look out for these.

I did play an early version of *La Corona Encantada*—the MSX ROM that was entered into the MSXdev08 competition—and must admit that I was a little disappointed. Although I hadn't much time to play the game either (which is why it wasn't reviewed for issue 2). This seems to have worked out for the better as the MSX version has been updated substantially.

So just what have they changed with the MSX version? Well, the ROM image comes with two modes: one with enhanced visuals that take advantage of the MSX's colourful palette and the other a legacy mode, featuring the earlier Spectrum-esque graphics that were used to. Well this may be all 'fine and dandy', but just what is the gameplay like? Well, I found it difficult but not too frustrating that you can't progress a bit at a time. Overall, a fine game that rewards patience.

Jolly, juming fun on the (enhanced) mode on the MSX...

While you can also enjoy the Legacy mode in all its monochrome glory...

The ZX Spectrum version is almost identical to the MSX Legacy version

DETAILS

Developer:	Karoshi Corporation
Platform:	MSX, ZX Spectrum
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	BlueMSX / ZX Spin
Genre:	Arcade Platform

RATINGS

Graphics:	91% / 84%
Sound:	78%
Gameplay:	83%
Overall:	**84%**

A nice bit of classic 8-bit platform adventuring

BINIAX 2

Words & screenshots by Duffman

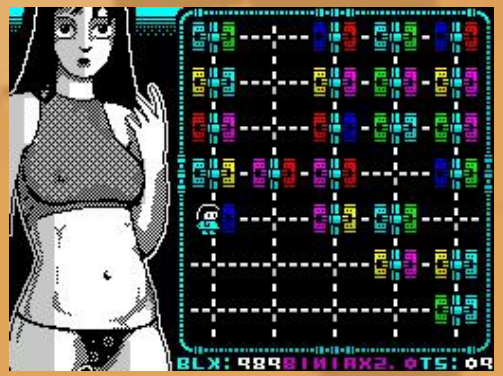
Nanako (The Mojon Twins' rather scantily clad heroine) is tired of the constant fighting over the surrounding land, so she decides to seek advice from the ever-knowing Oracle on what to do about the situation. The Oracle tells her that, rather than having the land around her suffer further bloodshed, she can resolve the problems by having the leaders take part in an ancient game created by the Gods themselves. The rulers of the surrounding land will therefore abide by the rules and the outcome of the game.

Swiftly following up their Amstrad CPC conversion of *Nanako in Classic Japanese Monster Castle*, The Mojon Twins have released their ZX Spectrum 128k interpretation on the classic game *Biniax*. The Twins haven't just converted the classic game over as is though—they've forged it with an interesting plot and some eye candy visuals to produce *Biniax 2*.

The play area is divided into five by seven squares, randomly filled by a pair of elements. These elements consist of two colours. Players take control of Nanako—who also starts off carrying a colour element—and have to match a similar colour element with their own. This is achieved by moving Nanako over the same colour element. For example, if Nanako is holding a red/blue element then you can only move into a square that contains an element with either red or blue within its colours. When Nanako takes over an element, that same coloured element is then carried to use on the next move.

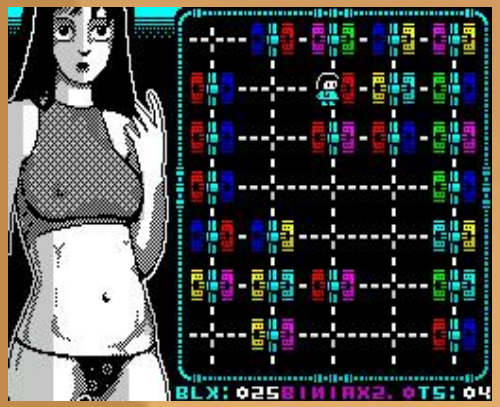
This may sound all so easy, but the screen moves down every so often which makes you think strategically about which elements to take over—you don't want to be stranded at the bottom of the screen when it is about to move. To win a level there are a certain amount of elements which need to be matched—this is shown at the bottom of the screen. If the player manages to achieve the target figure then it's off to the next level. If the player fails then you lose an item of clothing. You see, Nanako doesn't have lives. Instead she has to give up an item of clothing when she loses. If she hasn't got any more clothes to shed it's game over.

Let's not beat about the bush; the first thing you will notice about the game are the images, which, had the game been produced in the 80s or 90s, wouldn't look out of place in our regular "How to Cause A Complete Controversy" feature. Despite this rather risqué aspect of the game, the actual gameplay is of excellent quality and the addition of the plot doesn't feel as out of place as it may suggest. So it's another great game from The Mojon Twins to add to their ever-expanding catalogue.



With no blue elements available it looks like you lose an item of clothing. Oh dear

If you reach the target score on a level, then your opponent has to "lose" an item of clothing



It's best to hover around the top of the screen and take out elements to either side

DETAILS

Developer:	The Mojon Twins
Platform:	ZX Spectrum 128k
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	ZX Spin
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	84%
Sound:	76%
Gameplay:	88%
Overall:	**86%**

An excellent puzzle / strip thingy

INFECTION

Words & screenshots by Duffman

If you find that there is something amiss with this issue of *Retroaction*: blank pages or 40 pages instead of 80, then please, don't be alarmed. This isn't our fault. Rather the blame should be placed on Virgin Mastertronic, "Games That Weren't" website, and this fearsomely enjoyable game.

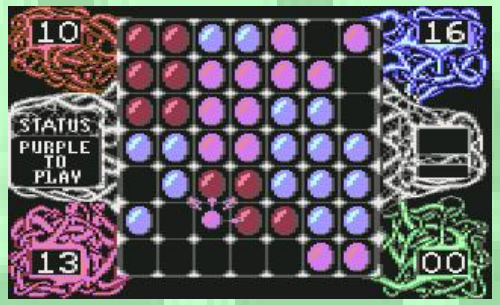
Yes, another puzzle game, but an incredibly addictive one with an interesting story. *Infection* was originally slated for release in 1989 on many home computer platforms but due to its name and timing it was held back. Over the years the game started to appear over the internet on many platforms except for (it seemed) the C64. Until now. *Infection* is a rather intriguing game where players win by literally infecting their opponent's board pieces.

I'll take it from the top. The game can be played with up to four players, against a mix of either one, two or three opponent (which can be either humans or computer A.I.). Each player starts the game with an equal amount of board pieces (coloured balls) and they have to clone them around the playing area. To do this, the player clicks their coloured ball and then the area which they wish to clone to. If an opposing ball is within two squares away then it is possible to land next to it and "infect" it, cloning your ball at the same time.

Each infection or clone will gain you points. The player with the most points when every area is filled is the winner. You can also edit the board, adding blocks to the playing area to extend the games variety. The game really comes into its own when played against a human player. The computer A.I. is quite difficult and a worthy opponent, but there's nothing quite like playing against a friend and infecting them.

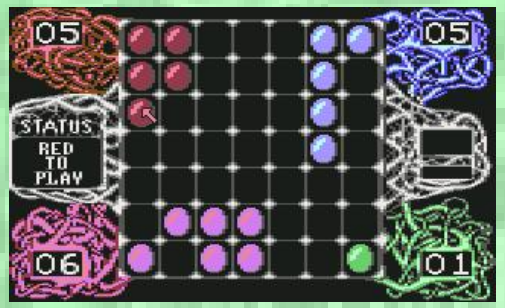
Players can use either the keyboard or a joystick. The game seems to have been designed for use with a joystick since it plays best with one (vs. the keyboard). There are also a variety of options to prolong the game's replayability. Players can be given time limits in which to make their moves, giving the game a further strategic element. There's also a game clock option that can be set to expire after a given period of time.

While puzzle games aren't renowned for their excellent visuals, *Infection* is a great game, with some colourful graphics and neat cloning animation effects. Sound is also of quality with music written by David Whittaker. And with some wickedly addictive gameplay *Infection* mounts up to one fantastic package.

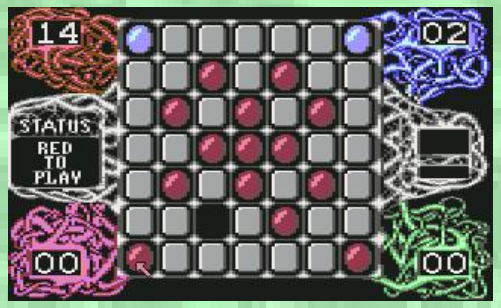


Ewww, a multiple infection move. And they're mostly my balls!

Yes, I've won a game at last. Phew. Patience will be rewarded



And we're off... Will you hold back and clone your territory, or attack the opposition?



You can even edit the board, although thare's not much room here

DETAILS

Developer:	Virgin Mastertronic
Platform:	Commodore 64
Weblink:	Direct Download
Emulator:	WinVICE
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	89%
Sound:	88%
Gameplay:	92%
Overall:	**90%**

Fiendishly addictive and infectious puzzler

GOMMY, MEDIEVAL DEFENDER

Words by Matty, screenshots by Duffman

Gommy, Medieval Defender is a new title from Retroworks, a Spanish coding group. The game is very similar in style to a very old Spectrum title, Creative Sparks' 1984 classic *Orc Attack*. Both games feature a player-controlled character running left and right at the top of a wall who has to throw boulders down at malevolent creatures trying to scale the wall and storm the castle.

The generally high quality of many latter-day Spectrum indie games means that this sort of thing is expected but *Gommy* more than rises to the challenge. The first thing that strikes you when you load up *Gommy* is the quality of the presentation—everything looks and sounds terrific. The graphics are beautifully drawn and highly detailed. Colour is used superbly whilst a jolly in-game tune accompanies the action. This is a Spectrum game that's pleasing on the ear and simply lovely to look at.

So what about the important thing? Well, the game plays very similarly to the aforementioned *Orc Attack*. Gommy runs back and forth, picking up boulders which are deposited to his left and right and throws them at the enemy soldiers attempting to climb the walls. Everything moves a character block at a time although this suits the action quite well and Gommy and his boulders move at a fair old. Various pick-ups appear on the battlements which Gommy can (go figure) pick up in order to affect gameplay in various ways. After completing a number of levels Gommy will be faced with a guardian monster which he must defeat by launching himself at it from a cannon (?). If he misses the creature on this stage he loses a life (?!), gaining a life when he destroys it.

As mentioned earlier Gommy runs back and forth rapidly enough; I wish I could say the same about the enemy soldiers. Maybe I've been playing these games for too long and become a bit too deft with the old fingers but I just felt they were rather slow and lacking in challenge. A feature *Gommy* has that its older inspiration didn't is various barriers which appear on the walls and which both the boulders and soldiers can't pass through (when boulders are dropped on them they roll either left or right until they can drop again) forcing the enemy to move around them. The enemies do speed up later on and additional threats such as lightning bolts on levels set at night-time (the gaming area is displayed in black and dark blue with the lightning illuminating the player, the boulders and the bad guys when it strikes; a nice touch) and spear-firing cannons help make things a little tricker later on. For much of the time I was playing this game the biggest threat of Game Over seemed to come from having to fire Gommy from his cannon at the end of level bosses. This lack of feeling any real pressure or of having your back against the wall and having to fighting a desperate fight against the enemy hordes means the game doesn't have that addictive "one more game" feel that simple arcade-style games like this need if they're to break out of the merely "okay" category to become "excellent".

Overall *Gommy* is an entertaining little game especially for kids and beginners, but it just needs to be a bit tougher and a bit more willing to make experienced gamers break out into a sweat. If it could have managed this it might have had gameplay to match its superior presentation.

DETAILS

Developer: RetroWorks
Platform: ZX Spectrum
Weblink: Gamecard
Emulator: ZX Spin
Genre: Arcade Adventure

RATINGS

Graphics: 90%
Sound: 81%
Gameplay: 62%

Overall: 68%

An enjoyable game which could have been more challenging

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

Words & screenshots by Neil Reive

Let me just say that I am a huge fan of *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* and while this is a remake of its predecessor, *International Soccer*, I was very much looking forward to it. That's the problem with anticipation; you're always due for a let down.

If you don't know *International Soccer*, it was an influential football game released on the Commodore 64 by Andrew Spencer in 1983. Audiogenic came along and took the basics of *IS* and improved on every aspect of it, producing *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* for the C64 in 1988—essentially a remake of *IS* in itself. *EHIS* features super realistic ball and player movement, advanced techniques ('5-direction' passing/shooting), sidestepping, barging, heading, back heels, lobs, diving headers, sliding tackles and many other miscellaneous features. In addition to all that *EHIS* has player management aspects with league, cup and season fixtures.

IS the remake is—just like the original—a simple arcade game of football. The view of the pitch is side-on as seen normally on TV. You can play against the computer A.I. or against a second human player. Each team can select a different colour kit: red, yellow, blue, grey, white or orange.

The remake consists of a one-off friendly type game (two teams face off against each other), which is played out over two halves, lasting three minutes each (computer time). Ball movement is quite unusual as it seems to fly through the air and drop suddenly like a plastic ball would. The players' movements are pretty limited with only pass, shoot and slide available. Additionally, having the goalkeeper controlled by the player—instead of the computer's A.I.—is extremely frustrating. After the final whistle a young woman presents the winning team captain with the trophy and that's about it.

Upon loading the game up my ears were greeted by a faithful rendition of the *EHIS* menu music which resulted in a wave of nostalgia running through me. Other effects like graphical touches and sound effects were also lifted from *EHIS* which begs the question: why not just remake *EHIS* in the first place?

Don't get me wrong, *IS* is polished, well programmed and accurate to its source material but so much more could have been done if *EHIS* was used as the inspiration. Yes, I know this is a remake of *IS* and as such the review should focus on that, but it would have been a better project all round if a little more time had been spent on the development of the game. So, Doc FrankN, when is the *EHIS* remake going to be released?

Smack! A thunderbolt shot rebounds off the goalkeeper and the players run around dazed

Chaos as a cross ball is sent towards the far corner of the goal. Did it go in? Not telling

Get in there! Goooooooooaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaallllllllllaaaaaaaaggggh!!

DETAILS

Developer:	Doc FrankN
Platform:	PC Windows
Weblink:	Download
Emulator:	N/A
Genre:	Sports

RATINGS

Graphics:	81%
Sound:	76%
Gameplay:	71%
Overall:	**72%**

Faithful remake that should please fans of the original

SHIFT

Words & screenshots by Duffman

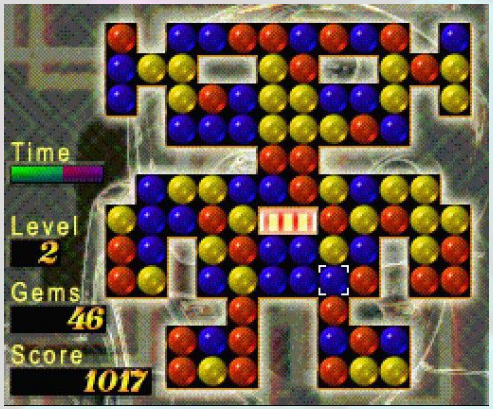
There seems to be some sort of puzzle fever in the past few months, what with the vast quantities of puzzlers released across many different formats. *Shift* itself is a reworking of *Bejeweled*—which is a popular game among developers it seems—and was entered into the recent Passion MSX2 competition over at passionmsx.org.

In *Shift*, you literally "shift" rows of gems up, down, left, or right, hoping to match up a group of similar colours. This group can match up either vertically, horizontally or a combination of both. The bigger the group, the bigger the score. Matching the gems is done by moving the on-screen cursor over one of the lines, pressing down on the designated fire button and moving the directional pad horizontally or vertically. When you have moved the row to where you want it simply release the button you depressed to select the row. The catch is that groups must contain a minimum number of matches, which is shown at the start of the level. If this number is not met then the move will revert back.

There are two game modes: Normal and Time Attack. In Normal mode you will play through levels trying to achieve the stated target score before the timer bar runs down. If you manage to reach the target score then you will be taken to the next level which will vary in shape and difficulty to the last. If you don't manage to achieve the target score before the time runs out, it's game over. In Time Attack you play through a chosen level until time runs out. Time bonuses can be obtained to extend the level.

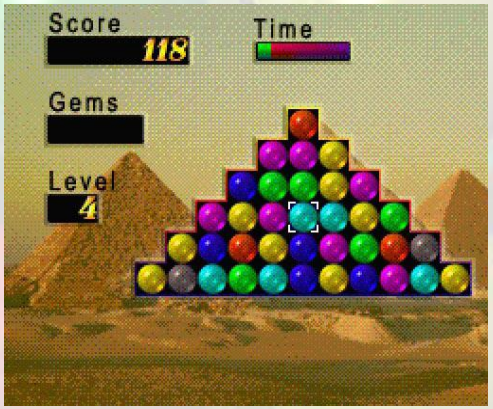
OK, we're getting puzzle saturation here, but this is an enjoyable game and shouldn't be dismissed just because it's yet another puzzle game. As you'd expect from an MSX2 game, the visuals are slick and colourful. While sound is limited—although not really necessary for this type of game—the gameplay is smooth and trouble free, resulting in an enjoyable game. It looks good, it plays good and it's rare to see an outing for the MSX2. What more do you want?

It's just a matter of shifting the lines into a position that creates a group of matching colours



Later levels include some interesting patterns and shapes

Things are made more difficult when new colours are introduced to the game



The Time Attack levels take place over a number of locations

DETAILS

Developer: Infinite
Platform: MSX2
Weblink: Direct Download
Emulator: BlueMSX
Genre: Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics: 89%
Sound: 77%
Gameplay: 83%
Overall: 85%

A fine Bejweled variant

LEGION OF THE DAMNED 2

Words & screenshots by Duffman

After the defeat of the evil vampiress Stryxia, the people of Hameria village built a church at the exact position where she was slain. Centuries passed, the village prosepered, expanded and was swallowed up in the growth of the neighbourhood, resulting in a big city. One thousand years after the death of Stryxia gang warfare is rife. After a particular nasty fight (cause a lot of bloodshed over evil Stryxia's grave) she is resurrected from the dead and is ready to cause even more strife this time around. Only two heroes, Starr and Michael, step forward to stop the evil Queen Stryxia.

Following on from *Legion of the Damned* (the *Golden Axe* inspired sideways Shoot Em Up Construction Kit romp, which gained a very respectable 84% in our second issue) the New Dimension guys have produced a sequel. This time Anthony Burns has chosen *Double Dragon* as his inspiration for *Legion of the Damned 2*.

One or two players embark on a skull-crunching, baddy-bashing trek through the city, an industrial estate and the city outskirts. Along the way you'll take on some of the worst bad guys you'll ever see: Vampire Thugs, Vampiresses, Shotgun Thugs, Attack Dogs, Wolves and various other evilness. Luckily Starr and Michael have brought along some useful weapons to defend themselves against the hordes of attacking evil. Starr has her throwing knives, which are great for close combat action but have a short range. Micheal on the other hand has a shotgun which is great for long range attacks but has a long reload rate.

One thing that makes *LotD2* so good is that all important two-player mode. It's a well known fact that games are usually always better when played with two players. *LotD2* is no exception. Taking a mate through the thug infested city landscape is great fun and not only can you watch each other's backs but you can double up on the fire power against the enemy. Believe me, you will need the extra hand as the game is as tough as those old boots that Stryxia died in all those years ago.

The graphics are suitably grim with blood splattered effects throughout. The game certainly has the *Double Dragon* brawler look about it. Not sure what I mean? Take a look at the screenshots here for a good idea of what looking like *Double Dragon* is all about. The sound is also up to scratch with a great title theme and some fine spot effects. While this may all seem like a retread of the first game—*LotD1.5* if you will—it is still an essential download for any side scrolling beat-'em-up fans.

She's behind you! Oh, no, she's not. Oh, yes, she is... and so on

Even the dogs have taken a dislike to you in this suburb

It's even better, and slightly easier, with two players. Twice the mayhem, as well

DETAILS

Developer:	The New Dimension
Platform:	Commodore 64
Weblink:	Direct Download
Emulator:	WinVICE
Genre:	Beat-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	82%
Sound:	81%
Gameplay:	84%
Overall:	**83%**

A large, tough challenge, best suited to two players

FACTORY DAZE

Words & screenshots by Duffman

Times are hard for high-class food restaurants and people are moving towards the cheaper option that fast food take away outlets offer. Some businesses are thriving in the current climate such as major toy manufacturers who produce the toys which come with children's meals sold at said fast food take away outlets. The demand for the toys however is having an adverse effect on the manufacturing machines of these toy companies. As a result toys start to get improperly assembled or even broken. One of these companies decides to hire someone to keep an eye on one of their machines and keep the sales quotas on track. That someone is you.

The purpose of the game is to produce a certain quota of toys required by the bosses (shown before the level begins). For example, level one might require four toys out of a batch of five kits with two different toys needed (shown in different colours for convenience).

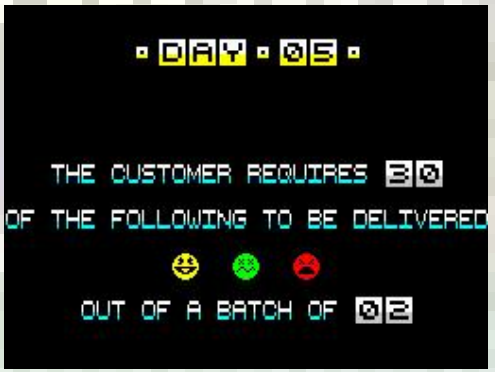
The toy kits start moving down a conveyer belt where the stamping machines are waiting to configure the toy kit to its programmed design. However, one of the machines is playing silly beggars so you have to manually set the design. If the machine is set to green then it will stamp the green design onto the kit whether the kit is green or not. If the kit is green then that's OK, if the kit isn't green then that's one mistake made. It's down to you to makes sure the stamping machines are switched to the correct design as the kit goes by. This is achieved by moving the keys/joystick right and left to make the corresponding toy image (colour) appear.

Once you get the toy kits through the broken stamping machines the rest of the factory process is more or less done for you as the toys are made without any intervention. The toy kits continue down the process until they are shipped into the back of a delivery van. If you achieve the level's quota then you will go to level two. If you miss the quota then it's a warning from your boss.

Things start to get very hectic when other stamping machines decide to break down—you can tell this as the toy icons appear on the front of it and the lights on it flash away. This now means that you have to move up and down between the two broken machines, adjusting them to the correct toy. If there are several different toys to produce (needing four machines to control) then things start getting really hairy.

The graphics look good with no visible colour clash and everything moves along smoothly. The soundtrack is impressive and sets the tone for the game very well. The all-important gameplay is as addictive as any other game. This game is definitely recommended to download.

Here you're in control of three machines, and things are starting to get hectic



Customer requirements must be met or there will be trouble

DETAILS

Developer: Bob Smith
Platform: ZX Spectrum
Weblink: Gamecard
Emulator: ZX Spin
Genre: Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	87%
Sound:	84%
Gameplay:	88%
Overall:	**87%**

A great game, but can get frustrating quickly

KUNG FU II

Words & screenshots by Duffman

It's an age old story: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy kicks some ass, boy rescues girl. How many times have we seen this plot turn up in video games? And yet it's a classic because it works so well in gaming terms. Here, your Kung Fu Master must travel through platform levels full of martial arts experts in order to defeat the evil Mr. X and save his girlfriend.

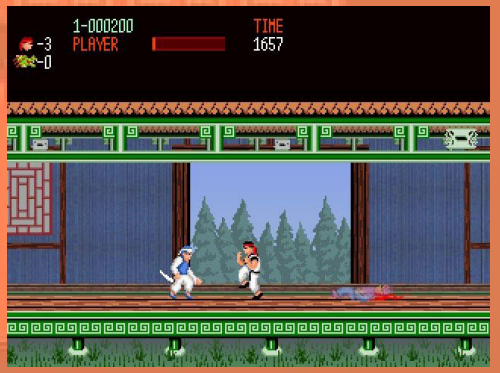
If you read issue 1 of Retroaction then you should know that Kung Fu II was entered into the "Sequels That Weren't" category in the Retro Remakes 2008 Competition and won. That was a very nearly finished version, labelled as v0.9 on the title screen, so it's good to see that Gary Gasko has gone back to the game and completed it. Looking at the screenshots you may be thinking of *Kung Fu Master*, and you wouldn't be far from it. *Kung Fu II* is the sequel to *Kung Fu* which appeared on the NES, which, in turn was based on the *Kung Fu Master* arcade original.

If you've played *Kung Fu Master* or even *Kung Fu* then you will know what to expect throughout these levels. As soon as the game begins nasty henchmen start ascending on your character from both sides so it's a good idea to keep moving and look sharp. Your character's health bar is displayed on screen and decreases after every hit he takes. If your health falls all the way down, then a life is lost.

Kerpow! The henchman goes flying, as does his blood

One of the end-of-level guardians. This one is particularly nasty

A flurry of kicks so fast that they just appear as blur on the screen



Aaargh! A knife thrower. Quick jump or get it in the gut

To help your mission, your kung fu master can perform a variety of moves including punches, kicks, jumps, leg sweeps, etc. If you miss-time a kick or fail to respond, the enemy can grab and place you into a hold which requires you to wriggle out of by moving the joystick left and right rapidly. Naturally, the levels become more difficult as you progress through them—maybe a little too difficult—and there's a nasty end of level guardian at the end of each level to dispose of as well.

The gameplay is still a tad frustrating as the earlier version was, and hasn't been made any easier. The visuals are good with some fine colourful graphics. The sound effects are reasonably handled. The game will be a huge challenge for anyone familiar with the genre and certainly a very daunting one for any new-comers.

DETAILS

Developer:	Gary Gasko
Platform:	PC-Windows
Weblink:	Direct Download
Emulator:	N/A
Genre:	Beat-'em-up

RATINGS

Graphics:	87%
Sound:	89%
Gameplay:	86%
Overall:	**86%**

A fine sequel to a classic beat-'em-up

POOMANIA

Words by **Duffman** & **Neil Reive**
screenshots by **Duffman**

I wasn't sure if I would get permission to review this game or not, so I went straight to the horses mouth for some answers.
DU: Chief, quick question.
NR: This better not be about *Biniax 2*. I already said you could review it.
DU: No, it's not about that. Do you consider the GBA retro?
NR: No.
DU: Why not?
NR: Well, for one, it's not that old, and second, it's still a supported platform.
DU: Still supported? How?
NR: The DS has a GBA cartridge slot on it, so essentially, it is a supported platform.
DU: Ah, but the recent DSi version has dropped that GBA slot, so you could say that the GBA isn't a supported platform anymore.
NR: OK, so maybe it is retro. Just. But don't be coming here asking about Xbox 360 or iPhone coverage.
DU: You'll get no argument from me there. However, I do want to review the GBA game *Poomania* for issue 3.
NR: I take it you've played the game?
DU: Yup, as you know it's a humorous take on the classic computer game *Pipemania*. Paul the plumber is in deep... trouble, as Fatarse Fritz has just made his way to the outhouse and the pipe work hasn't been repaired yet.
NR: OK, sounds like a laugh. How does it compare with *Pipemania*? Does it have the same sort of gameplay/interface?
DU: Sure it does. You use the directional pad to move the cursor around, press "A" to lay a piece of pipe, and press "B" if you need to remove a piece. The pipes are dispensed from a container on the left hand side of the screen. The bottom most piece is the one you can currently lay. Each piece consists of a corner, crossroad, or straight pipeline. However, the wrong piece invariably turns up at the wrong time. You need to complete the pipe work by connecting the 'start' to the 'end' before time runs out. Once Fatarse flushes, no other pipe can be laid down.
NR: Then what happens?
DU: Well if you've managed to complete the pipework then it's off to the next level. Other wise it's game over.
NR: Anything else worthy of a mention?
DU: Well, there's the strategy element. You can go to where you want to lay the pipe and delete the wrong ones until the right one comes up. This costs time so you may want to plan ahead instead by laying pipes that you will connect up along the way.
NR: So how about the graphics and sound?
DU: The graphics are great with many humorous touches throughout. It's a puzzle game, so sound isn't essential, but what is in there is good enough. It's the playability, however, that sticks out here and it is intense.
NR: OK, I'll tell you what, if you can get a review of the game to me within the next half an hour, I'll put it in the next issue.

Some of the later levels force you to lay the pipework in a certain way, weaving around rocks

Ah, a completed line of pipework. No mess here, then

DETAILS

Developer: WiDDY, Ragnarok, Fieser Wolf, Razor-96
Platform: GBA
Weblink: Gamecard
Emulator: Visual Boy Advance
Genre: Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	87%
Sound:	81%
Gameplay:	80%
Overall:	**81%**

A good little puzzler with a humorous touch

BERZERK REDUX

Words & screenshots by **Duffman**

Alert! Alert! Kill the human! And with that you need to run pronto, kill any robots that get in the way and escape. That's about all there is to the plot but what a fiendishly addictive game it is.

Berzerk was originally an arcade game released by Stern Electronics in 1980. It was eventually ported to a few home consoles at the time: Atari 2600, Atari 5200 and the GCE Vectrex. Thankfully, Martin Piper thought it would be a good idea to give *Bezerk* the 'Redux' treatment (brought back and restored) so retrogamers can experience one of arcade gaming's finest moments on their C64.

Gameplay is fairly simple: you control the stick figure humanoid who must avoid or kill the robots and escape to freedom. Each screen consists of four exits (either open or closed), a random number of robots and an electrified maze of walls. While early (white) robots are slow and don't retaliate much, later screens have some hyper (red) robots hell-bent on destroying you.

Amusingly, the robots are pretty docile as they occasionally collide with each other, getting themselves killed in the process. The early screens ease you in with their minimal difficulty and if you take out all the robots in any one screen you will get some bonus points. After destroying all of the robots it's then time to run onto the next screen to discover what awaits you there.

The speed and danger of the game does pick up as the game progresses, and if you take too long in one particular screen then the Evil Otto will appear. This happy smiley chappy (which looks just like a smiley face) bounces along the screen towards your character and is invincible so avoid it at all costs. Players will quickly discover that running is a good tactic in general as the later screens can get quite congestive (what with robots and gunfire coming in from all directions).

With so much happening on screen and careful negotiation of the screens needed (as the walls are electrified), it is a welcome relief that the controls are super responsive and that any errors made are purely down to player error. The game is fast and furious and demands players have quick reflexes in order to get the most out of it.

Bezerk Redux is a great conversion of a good old fashioned shooter, right down to the nostalgic electronic speech, sound effects, restrained graphics and gameplay. Again the game is extremely addictive and with a high score table you'll keep coming back for more. Fans of the original won't be disappointed. The arcades aren't dying off, they're right here on the Commodore 64!

Shoot the robots, run, escape. Can't get any simpler than that, but what an addictive game...

Watch out on later areas, though, as the robots start shooting back, and there's also Evil Otto to avoid

Don't get too close to the robots or it's dying time

DETAILS

Developer: Martin Piper
Platform: C64
Weblink: Gamecard
Emulator: WinVICE
Genre: Shooter

RATINGS

Graphics: 47%
Sound: 81%
Gameplay: 90%
Overall: 88%

A superb conversion and arguably better than the arcade

RAMBO

Words & screenshots by Duffman

Everyone has seen the original film and played the original game from Ocean, right? Seeing as the film was remade, why not the game as well? Well, Mick Farrow must have thought the same thing as he has produced just that, based on the speccy version of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*.

Controlling our muscle bound hero, your mission is to traverse the jungles of Vietnam in search of American POWs to rescue. Rambo begins his five level mission at the south of a POW camp where the Viet Cong begin swarming around him like flies.

Initially Rambo is armed with a knife, a bow and arrows. Along the way other weapons (a machine gun, grenades and a rocket launcher) can be picked up. These are best used in different situations as the less noisy ones don't attract so much attention from the enemy.

The enemy will shoot at Rambo on sight so you are constantly under pressure to keep on the move. It's all too easy to get surrounded and shot down like a wild animal being hunted by poachers. When Rambo takes a hit, he goes down fast with a life lost—no energy bar here (which perhaps could have been less harsh). With three lives in total you're going to need your game to be in top form to complete your mission.

One thing that bothered me was the lack of a 360 degree spray of machine gun fire. Being able to only fire in eight directions means that you are open to a stray bullet from the enemy all too often. I would have hoped that a remake may have provided some sort of improvement over this limitation.

As Rambo moves around, the screen scrolls in the same direction and is done so very smoothly. The graphics are reasonably done with some over the top blood splatters as the enemy are mown down. The music is appropriately atmospheric. In the end the game is just too frustrating to enjoy the beautiful aesthetics, which is a shame, as there has obviously been a lot of work from a talented coder put into this remake.

You have two choices: fight or run, but you can't hide

The machine gun can shoot out bullets at a rapid pace

You can't run too far without having the enemy track you down

DETAILS

Developer:	Mick Farrow
Platform:	PC Windows
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	N/A
Genre:	Shooter

RATINGS

Graphics:	86%
Sound:	87%
Gameplay:	68%
Overall:	**72%**

Good effort, but maybe needed a reboot rather than a remake.

SUDOKU MASTER

Words by Mark Hall, screenshots by Duffman

Whilst the Sudoku craze is currently sweeping the newspapers and next gen portable hardware across the globe, an 8-bit programmer has been locked away busy programming a new version of Sudoko for the Amstrad CPC.

Like many of the early 8-bits, the CPC still survives through its small, but dedicated community. *Sudoku Master,* from Olivier, is a stylish and exciting 8-bit take on this next generation puzzler. If you've never heard of Sudoku, you've either been locked in a closet for the last five years or just woken from a deep coma. Sudoku is a basic, no frills, crazy puzzle game based around logic. This isn't the first attempt at a Soduko game on the CPC but trust me - *Sudoku Master* with its 128 levels of puzzles is the only version you'll probably ever need.

For those already into Sudoku, you'll have a great time playing the CPC version. You've probably already got several favourite ways to play (newspaper, Web browser or even on the iPhone). There are literally hundreds of different ways to play the game, most of which are free. Because of this, the CPC version might only appeal to the already established CPC community, but if you're not on the go a lot and don't have any of the new next gen devices then the CPC is a good place to get your Sudoku fix.

Sudoku Master is simple to pick up; you're presented with a nine-by-nine grid which is divided into a nine three-by-three block formations. The rules for Sudoku couldn't be simpler. All you have to do is fill the empty squares so that each row, column and smaller 3x3 block contains all the numbers 1 to 9 with no repetition allowed. A portion of the puzzle is already filled in and you'll need to use the existing information to deduce where all the missing numbers must go.

Navigating the board takes a bit of getting used to but the controls are well thought out. Normally Sudoku puzzles have around five levels of difficulty, allowing a real beginner to get into the game. This version only has four: easy,

Playing Sudoku on the CPC is surprisingly easy

So many levels to complete; you'll be playing for some time

medium, hard and evil. The easy difficulty setting is at the high end of what most would consider a beginners skill level. New players might struggle. The inclusion of a hint option might have helped a little.

Sudoku Master is a competent package. The visual elements of *Sudoku Master* are excellent, with all the numbers appearing clearly and recognizably. The board is large enough that you won't find yourself accidentally putting the numbers in the wrong place. The only possible gripe with the graphics is that mode 0 wasn't used so the colour can seem a bit sparse. This is a comparatively minor complaint, however, and at least the background default colour of bright blue can be changed to something a little more soothing on the eyes.

As usual, there is little that can be said about the Amstrad's audio. In truth, it's 'OK'. Pleasant tunes play throughout, with the music being calm and ultra soothing, serving to relax the player rather than disturb them. Strangely enough, all the usual sound based bells and whistles you'd expect from a puzzle game have been omitted?

Reviewing a Suduko game is difficult. It's no fun to watch or to read about someone else playing it. You just have to experience it for yourself. All I can say is that I thoroughly recommend *Sudoku Master,* without hesitation, to any CPC owner or person interested in, or curious about Sudoku. Download today!

DETAILS

Developer:	Binary Sciences
Platform:	Amstrad CPC
Weblink:	Gamecard
Emulator:	WinAPE
Genre:	Puzzle

RATINGS

Graphics:	82%
Sound:	74%
Gameplay:	89%
Overall:	**87%**

A great conversion of a classic puzzle game

BIOHELL

Words by Matty, screenshots by Duffman

When sci-fi writer Andy Remic decided to promote his new novel *Biohell* he decided to do so via the highly unusual route of not only writing a videogame himself to "accompany" it but to write the game on the ZX Spectrum platform. Naturally the Speccy community applauded him for this bold move although I'm not sure what his publishers thought.

Let's not let that get in the way of a review of the game in question. Also called *Biohell* it's a text adventure (as they were called back then, they generally go under the slightly-pretentious name of "interactive fiction" these days) written using Incentive's *Graphic Adventure Creator* utility. The setting for this game is simply called The City and from it's very first location it's made clear that it's not a nice place. The other locations in the game do nothing to change that initial impression. Players take on the role of 'Franco' who is accompanied by two other characters, Keenan and Pippa (who don't seem to do much except interject every so often to tell the player off for not slaughtering zombies). Everywhere you go in the game seems to be run-down and ruinous and if it isn't filled with zombies then it's filled with human remains.

There are sounds of savage tearing and rending. Fires crackle. EXITS: N, E, S, W. -
-We need to get this mission sorted, FRANCO, says PIPPA, with her hand on the hilt of her yukana sword.
Command, sir?

You know it's not going to be a good day when the least of your worries are numerous fires

From what I can gather Franco's mission is, as his two accomplices keep reminding him, to kill zombies. Don't get the impression that this is some kind of text-based version of *Doom*. At it's heart, *Biohell* is a puzzle-solving text adventure where the player has to explore various locations, find objects and work out what to do with them.

Despite being a new game *Biohell* doesn't follow the current Spectrum indie tendency of trying to match or outclass the presentation and coding of the Spectrum's golden era. This game actually feels quite old-fashioned and despite the preponderance of gore, violence and swearing (this game isn't suitable for kids although you should have got that from my earlier comments) it reminds me more than anything of early text adventures from around 1983. The games parser is extremely simple, with the most common commands being NORTH, EAST and DROP BOWEL MEAT. There's none of the sophistication of Magnetic Scrolls (one of the big text adventure developers from the 1980s) to be found here. Further removing sophistication is the lack of any sort of EXAMINE command meaning that any objects found have to be taken at face value. If the game tells you a "SILVER GUN" is in a room then that's all there's going to be to it. If you try to EXAMINE things (as most seasoned gamers will have at first) you get the rather-odd reply "that would show you're a transmogrified pile of rancid flesh, sir" which seems to be this game's version of "you can't do that".

Sophistication, however, isn't the point of *Biohell*. At heart this is an exercise in atmosphere and it's here that this game works. Play it for a while and you start to feel you need a bath; every location feels fetid and soaked in grease and blood and Remic's often highly effective descriptions (the first location has "staccato ridges of skyscrapers, cubeblocks and grim concrete tenements, tower upon tower upon tower", and from a surgical facility "the walls are a sterile puke green") help re-enforce the squalor. Fortunately, this degenerate atmosphere is lightened by the game's sense of humour: one of the locations is a "zombie hairdresser" where the player finds zombies busy getting pink rinses. One of the first objects I found is the distinctly untempting "Porky Pauper Brain Burger". Some locations are illustrated by pictures which, although very simple and whose bright Spectrum colours seem inappropriate, are nonetheless welcome.

A WIDE HIGHWAY. Corpses litter tarmacadam, many with heads ripped open, brains scooped. You smell smoke. A deep moaning echoes... zombies can smell meat. EXITS:N, E, S, W.You note- a rancid CORPSE HEAD
Command, sir?

Scooped out brains, zombies on the loose... Command? Run like the clappers. Not a choice, eh?

DETAILS

Developer: Andy Remic
Platform: ZX Spectrum
Weblink: Gamecard
Emulator: ZX Spin
Genre: Adventure

RATINGS

Graphics: 59%
Sound: 10%
Gameplay: 52%

Overall: 57%

Simple puzzle-solving with offal and "baths of pus"

MOTHER OF ALL PROJECTS

Words & screenshots by **Ack**

What is *Mother*?, I hear many of you asking. Well the word *Earthbound* will trigger a response from many of you. *Mother* is role-playing game that was released on the Famicom in Japan in 1989. It was due to get a release in the West in 1990 but this was put on hold indefinitely. A sequel, *Mother 2*, was released in Japan in 1994 and this time the West did receive a translation in 1995 under the familiar English title *EarthBound*. The *Mother* and *EarthBound* series have since gone on to become some of the best loved RPGs of their time.

In 1998 a fan translation group called Neo Demiforce purchased the Beta cartridge of *Mother* and started a project to finish the English translation of the game. That project was completed and to distinguish it from the previously released *Earthbound*, the game was called *Earthbound Zero*.

In 1997 Nintendo began work on *Mother 3* which was to be released for the Nintendo 64DD. Development of the game was cancelled in 2000. Mother 3 eventually surfaced on the Game Boy Advance in 2006, albeit only in Japan. Nintendo was not intending to localize the game for the West so fans from Starmen.net began their own localization of the game. Two years of hacking, translating and coding later, *Mother 3* was translated. Thanks to that teams effort, with the game's ROM and appropriate patch you can now play the game in English.

Mother 1+2 is a compilation release of *Mother* and *Mother 2* for the Game Boy Advance. Released in 2003, the package contains the Mother game that was planned for English translation (including changes and tweaks) and the *Mother 2* game is essentially *EarthBound* translated to Japanese. This compilation is also a Japan only release, giving fans another opportunity to localize the package for the Western World.

Retroaction: In general, would you say the response to your translation of *Mother 3* has been very good? Do you feel it was worth the time and effort spent on the project?
Mato: Yes, it looks like fans really enjoy it, and more and more it seems like people who've never played the games before have gotten into the series because of *Mother 3*'s translation. The project itself was a fun (although grueling) experience, so I'm glad to have been a part of it.

R: What would you say was the most difficult part of translating *Mother 3*?
M: Reprogramming the game was definitely the most difficult part of the project. As for the actual translation itself, I'd say the sheer amount of text to be translated was the most daunting thing. That and trying to make the text sound decent in translation.

R: You've already released translation notes for the project on *Mother 3*'s intro and prologue. Are you expecting to release more notes of individual sections in the near future?
M: I don't know about the near future—I still have a few other projects I want to get off my plate first before I resume the translation notes. But I definitely want to continue with them at some point. After the patch was released, I realized I wanted a break from *Mother 3*, so that's partly why the notes are taking so long. I think they'll be pretty interesting though.

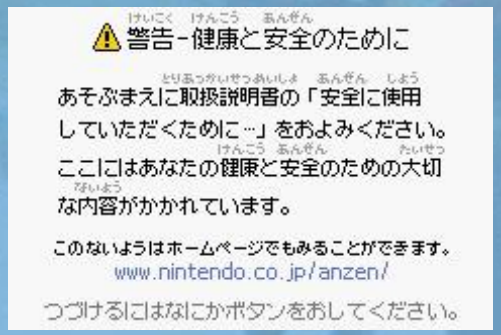
R: Do you know if series creator Shigesato Itoi is aware of your efforts to translate *Mother 3*, and has he made any statements you know of about the project?
M: Yes, I'm almost 100% certain he's aware of the project. He hasn't said anything on the subject, at least not in public and not to us.

R: Do you have any precise figures on how many times the translation patch was downloaded in the first six months?
M: Apparently the hosting service (AWS) we used for the patch has weird logs or limitations or something, so we only saw how the first few weeks went. I think we stopped paying attention after that and then later realized that old logs get deleted or something. I know we were past 100,000 early on, so the total is probably somewhere between that and 200,000.

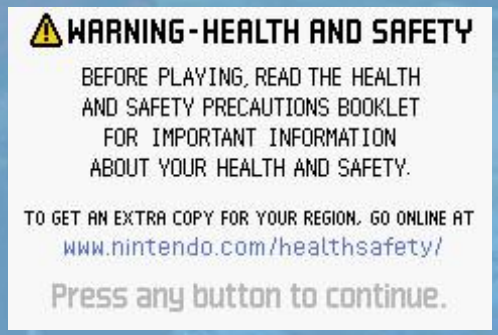
R: Why the decision to move onto the first title from *Mother 1+2* for Game Boy Advance? Do you have any concrete details about the *Mother 2* section being translated?
M: I was basically just playing around with different games and found that the *Mother 1* part of *Mother 1+2* was very easy to hack, so I thought I'd give it a go. I know Jeff is still very interested in working on the *Mother 2* part, but he's gotten a lot busier since the *Mother 3* patch was released.

THE
MOTHER 3
FAN TRANSLATION
THIS IS A FREE, UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION MADE ENTIRELY BY DEDICATED MOTHER / EARTHBOUND FANS. PLEASE SUPPORT THIS SERIES BY PURCHASING OFFICIAL MERCHANDISE, INCLUDING THE OFFICIAL TRANSLATION IF ONE IS EVER RELEASED.
English
v1.1
THE TRANSLATION TEAM
MOTHER3.FOBBY.NET

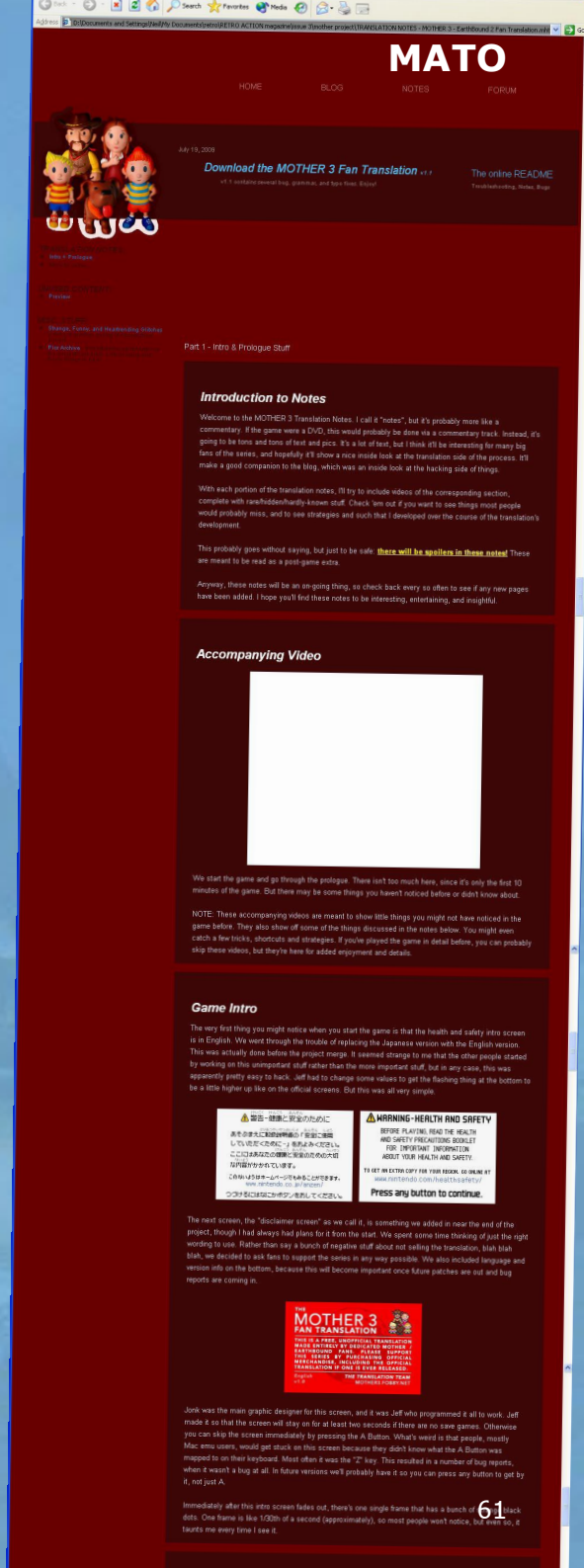
Applying the patch couldn't be any easier...

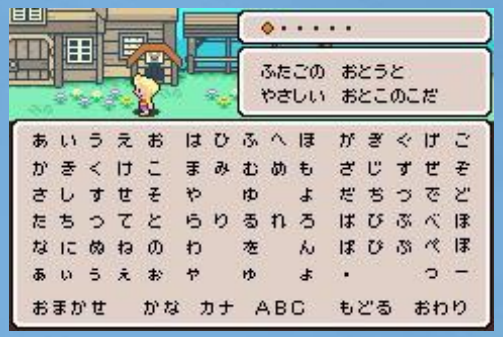


All the instructions are included in the translation pack...


⚠WARNING-HEALTH AND SAFETY
BEFORE PLAYING, READ THE HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS BOOKLET FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.
TO GET AN EXTRA COPY FOR YOUR REGION, GO ONLINE AT
www.nintendo.com/healthsafety/
Press any button to continue.

Once succesfully patched, you can then enjoy the game in English





The character naming screen in its original Japanese...

...and the same character naming screen in English. Hurrah

R: What has the public response been like to your decision to translate *Mother 1*?
M: I've actually been kind of surprised at it—the response was bigger than I expected. Among fans, the first game is kind of overlooked. But people seem excited by it, so I hope the translation can live up to expectations.

R: The version of *Mother 1* used in the GBA compilation is said to be based on a Japanese translation of the edited version made up for the original planned American release by a Nintendo employee at the time, Phil Sandhop. Do you feel Sandhop's changes had a positive impact on the game? How has it affected your translation?
M: Some of the gameplay changes have been nice, the ability to run was added to the unreleased U.S. version of the game, and then it was included in the Japanese *Mother 1+2*. Japanese fans seemed to like that. The added ending sequence is also much nicer than the original ending, which was just rolling credits. These definitely added more to the game. These don't really affect the translation itself, though. Some of the censoring and changes seem kind of bizarre, though.

R: Do you personally prefer the initial Japanese release, or the version presented in *Mother 1+2*?
M: I prefer the *Mother 1+2* version because of the gameplay additions, the added ending, things like that. Mostly the ending though—if I had played *Mother 1* as a little kid and made it all the way to the end only to see scrolling credits I probably would've broken a controller.

R: Have there been many instances where you've felt it necessary to make a change for continuity's sake in *Mother 1*?
M: Right now the main thing is how to spell the antagonist's name: Itoi intended it to be Gyiyg, *EarthBound* changed it to "The Geek" and the eventually to "Giygas", and in the NES prototype they called him "Giegue". I think there are a few other minor things like item names that also have continuity, but it's not obvious because the NES prototype changed things around.

R: While working on *Mother 3*, you released a video of bizarre glitches and bugs that resulted as hacks and translations were done to the game. Are you encountering similar problems in *Mother 1*, and do you plan on releasing video documentation so the public can see them?
M: With *Mother 1*, there's very little hacking to be done, so there haven't been any crazy glitches at all so far. So I don't think there'll be a video like that. If we ever work on the *Mother 2* portion, I'm sure there'll be plenty of crazy glitches with that though.

R: Do you have plans to release translation notes for *Mother 1* upon completion?
M: I'm not sure yet, but I have been thinking about making a site or a page that lists the differences between *Mother 1*, *EarthBound Zero*, and the *Mother 1+2* translation. There are already sites that list the graphical changes, but the text changes and translation mistakes are more interesting and numerous.

R: Have you conferred at all with Neo Demiforce (a fan translation group that found the beta cartridge of the unreleased translated version of *Mother 1* in the late 1990s (they managed to dump the ROM for public access, calling it *EarthBound Zero*) about the project?
M: Demi (who basically *is* Neo Demiforce) actually worked with us on the *Mother 3* translation, so we're in contact.

R: How near to completion is your translation patch of *Mother 1*? Can you estimate a potential release date at this time? What more do you need to do on the translation?

The beginning of Mother 3 in Japanese...

...and translated to English

M: When I first announced the project, I expected it only to be a few months, but then the project wound up taking low priority as I started things like EarthBound Central and version 1.1 of the *Mother 3* patch. It's still not high priority, but it'll probably be a few more months until I have something to release. I also want to have the patch include basic menu/item/enemy/etc. translations for the *Mother 2* portion of the game, so that's partly why it'll take a little while longer.

R: Several months ago, Square-Enix sent a cease-and-desist letter to the members of Chrono Compendium, threatening legal action to anyone found making *Chrono Trigger* ROM hacks. Have you ever received any similar action from Nintendo? Have they made any statements regarding your translation projects whatsoever or ever contacted you about them?
M: No, Nintendo has never contacted us, though they're definitely aware of all of this. Reggie's (*Reggie Fils-Aimé, COO, Nintendo of America –ed.*) even talked about the translation project in the past. I don't expect any contact at this point, but if for some reason they ever want it, they're free to use or have my translated script and other materials, no charge at all, no strings attached.

R: Which of the three *Mother* games would you say is your favorite?
M: *EarthBound*/*Mother 2*. I like the feeling of adventure it has as you travel all over the world and see different places.

R: What other translation projects have you worked on in the past?
M: Here's a not-up-to-date list of my translation projects, both professional and hobbyist: http://tomato.fobby.net/translations/

R: If readers are interested in discovering more information about either the *Mother 3* or *Mother 1+2* English translation projects, where do you suggest they look?
M: mother3.fobby.net/index.php is the development blog, so if you want to see how much work went into the project, that's the place to check out.

mother12.net is where I post updates about the *Mother 1+2* translation project.

EarthBound Central (earthboundcentral.com) is probably the best place to watch for news about both projects, though.

R: Are you aware of any projects to translate these games into other languages besides English?

M: We're currently working with teams around the world to translate *Mother 3* into nine other languages. I'm hoping to be able to do the same with the *Mother 1* part of *Mother 1+2* eventually.

We're not working on the *Mother 2* part of the game right now, but if we do, I'd like to make our tools and hacks compatible with other languages. Because of technical reasons, translating *EarthBound* into other languages has been hell, but it would be a LOT easier to translate *Mother 1+2*'s *Mother 2* because it was programmed differently.

R: Is there anything else you feel our readers should know?
M: I find it amazing that almost 15 years since *EarthBound*'s release, the game is more popular than ever. Maybe it was a case of being before its time, or maybe it's because the game and its fans have some kind of creativity feedback loop going on.

The *Mother* series was inspired by *Dragon Quest*—Shigesato Itoi basically enjoyed *Dragon Quest* but said to himself, "I can make this more interesting." Now that kids who played *EarthBound* have grown up, I wonder if *EarthBound* might inspire some of them in the same way and help create something along those same lines.

ROBO WARRIOR

Words & screenshots by
Carl “triverse” Williams

DETAILS

Developer:	Hudson Soft
Publisher:	Jaleco
Released:	1988
Platform:	NES
Genre:	Arcade

RoboWarrior: an obscure and often overlooked action puzzle game, released in America by Jaleco on the NES. What does that sentence mean to you? Probably nothing as *RoboWarrior* didn't exactly receive anywhere near the same following that it's distant cousin *Bomberman* did (both were programmed by Hudson Soft in Japan and even share the same game universe). *RoboWarrior* is more of a single-player experience vs. *Bomberman's* multiplayer slant. In *RoboWarrior* you set out on the planet Altile with the intent to stop the evil Xantho empire which has attacked and taken over an innocent world for their evil needs.

Piloting your ZED (Z-type Earth Defence) cyborg you must take out the Xantho empire and return Altile to its former glory. While you have unlimited firepower with your pulse weapon, you are severely limited with bombs. These are needed to destroy the blocks that are constantly blocking your path through the game. You can replenish your bombs by either killing enemies or picking up bomb tiles (which are fairly rare) that are under the blocks you must destroy to advance (see the irony there?). The blocks come in varying colors and designs but all have the same qualities, they are in your way and need to be blown up to continue. There are two types of levels: Ones that loop and ones that dont (which require you to find required items). Additionally a level can be completely dark though you can find candles or lanterns to light them up. You will always be required to get a Chalice and a Key to finish a level. On the levels that loop you will need to find the required items (helpful because you can't go back after advancing the screen and sometimes there are more than one way to go through a level).

While not the most complex game ever, *RoboWarrior* is still a hard game. Not because it is cheap (at least till you got to the bosses). When fighting bosses you will realize that your pulse weapon is pretty much useless and that you will have to take some hits from the bosses to place bombs near them. Keeping that in mind, you will need to make sure that you stock up on bombs before leaving a level (there is no indication that the next level is a boss fight). Speaking of the bosses, some people don't know that the NES was using multiple sprites moving together to make larger enemies than the

The boss guardians are tough, but not impossible

You can clearly see the legacy of *Bomberman* in the level design

***RoboWarrior* features a clear play area with bright graphics**

Aargh! it's the Blob. Run for it

Take a look at the snake boss in RoboWarrior, it is scary, and dangerous, but it is a work of programming art in that, technically, it shouldn't be on the screen

The technically impressive snake showing some impressive moves

Showing great use of the NES color palette

RoboWarrior is what I like to call the first survival action game in the US; you have to collect supplies to continue

hardware was technically capable of doing. Take a look at the snake boss in *RoboWarrior*, it is scary for one, and dangerous, but it is a work of programming art in that technically, it shouldn't be on the screen.

RoboWarrior is what I like to call the first survival action game in the US. You have to collect supplies to continue on, bombs being the most used item. You will need to keep an eye on your constantly dropping health (you are a cyborg constantly using energy). Run out of candles in a tunnel (or a dark level) and you are simply in trouble with very rare lanterns as your back up. Some items are in the same place every time you play. The majority are randomly placed, making it hard to form much of a strategy other than blow it up if you can. There will be times in the later levels that you are simply stuck in maybe a quarter of the screen and with no bombs (this can happen many a time, even when keeping bombs at max as much as possible).

The music of *RoboWarrior* is great for the time it was made; it is not as good as Tommy Tallarico's works for the Mega Drive/Genesis, but really what can compare to his work? Sound effects are great also. Bombs have volume to their explosions (not just a pop but a resonating sound effect that gives them 'bite' like a real bomb). The enemies are pretty much the same, they change out maybe three times but the same type of enemy acts the same, no matter what graphic he has on any given level.

Jaleco picked up a really good game with *RoboWarrior* and it's too bad it wasn't as well received as *Bomberman*. If you are into survival type games, at least give *RoboWarrior* a shot, you may just find out that you like it. Too bad we have gone through at least four console generations and no one has gone back or even attempted a remake of this great game.

THE COMPUTER WARRIOR

Bobby Patterson had discovered the secret code that allowed him to enter his home computer and play software games for real. Bobby had been chosen by the Warlord, a grim guardian of the electronic flux, to battle the dark forces that controlled the computer's Nightmare Zone. Now Bobby had returned to the real world to a scene of disaster...

Words & scanned images by **Neil Reive**
original images © **IPC Magazines**

Following straight on from the second story arc (which ended on 22nd October 1988) the third story arc involves Bobby squaring off against members of the Nightmare Zone's dark forces. While the first two story arcs were pretty epic—some might even say drawn out—the third arc is much shorter with only five contests in total and was only published for a little over a year (29th October 1988-2nd September 1989). The author of *Computer Warrior* at this time is unknown as the publication had stopped crediting the creative team within the comic strip. We can however recognise that the artwork was produced by Mike Dorey whose work remained present throughout this story arc.

As Bobby returned home after becoming the Ultimate Warrior he discovered that his parents had been killed and that his hometown had been obliterated. The Warlord appeared to remove any of Bobby's concerns. The devastation is but an illusion to show Bobby what would happen if the Nightmare Zone's Dark Forces were to escape the computer realm and enter into the real world. The Warlord disperses the illusion and Bobby runs back inside of his house to see his parents alive and well. As he enters his bedroom he notices that the Warlord has left something for him: the first challenge game, *Roadblasters*.

When Bobby materialises inside the computer's realm he is introduced to the first dark force champion, Skullaxe, a skeleton creature. The Warlord explains the game's goal: 50,000 points. Bobby settles into his command chair and takes control of a turbo force vehicle which is far below on the planet's surface and viewed by a satellite link. After Bobby takes the lead Skullaxe goes axe happy and swipes at Bobby, misses and destroys his control panel. Realising that he must do something to balance the advantage that his opponent now has Bobby lures Skullaxe into another swipe. This time it's Skullaxe's controls that are destroyed. Bobby finally uses a support shuttle to fly down to the surface, realising the only way to continue the race is from the driver's seat.

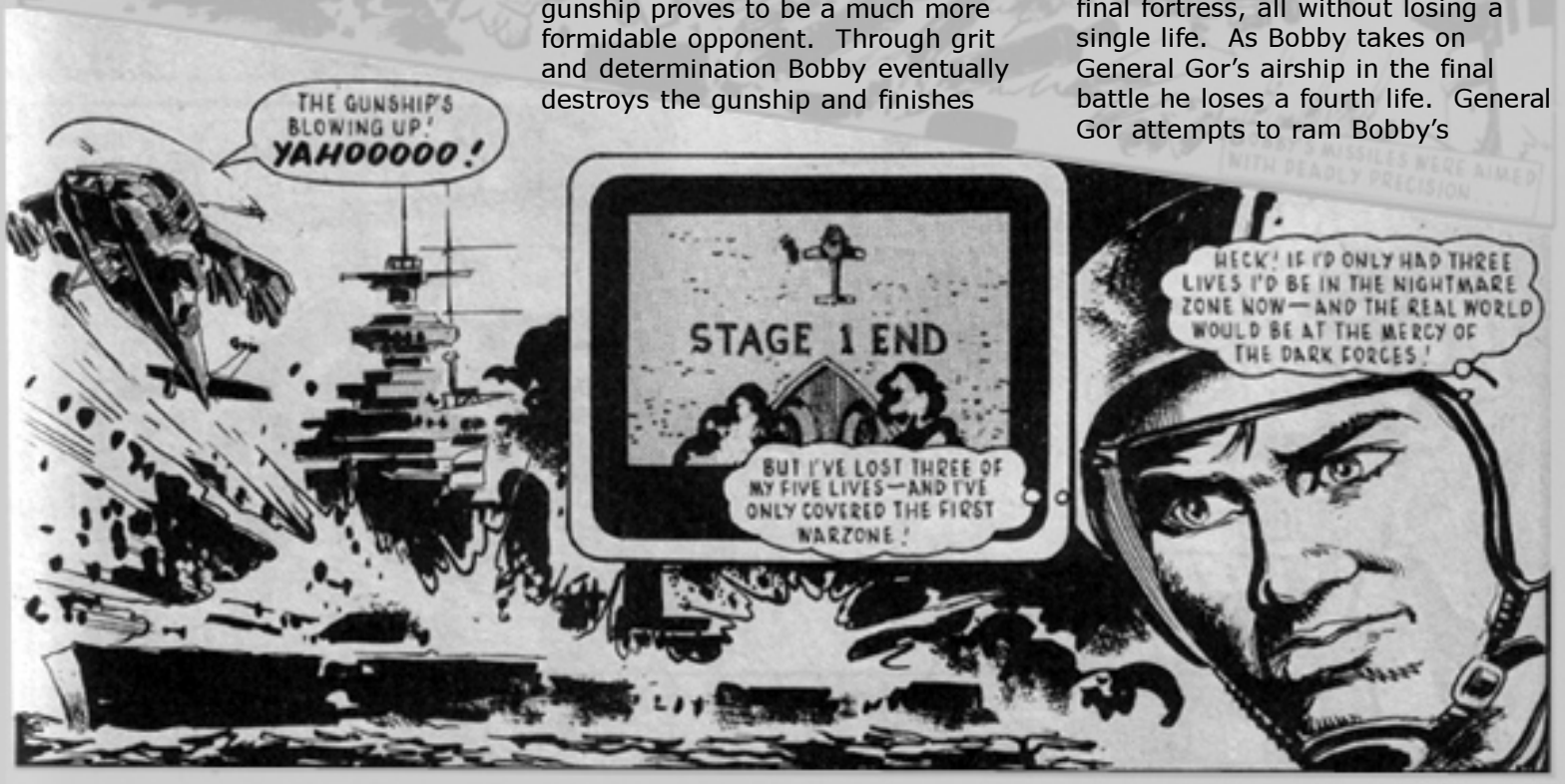
As the race continues both Bobby and Skullaxe take and lose the lead on numerous occasions. As the two

contestants head for the finish line they are neck and neck. Skullaxe has the faster car and pulls away. In response Bobby turns his rotating cannon backwards and fires all barrels, giving him valuable recoil that propels his vehicle past the finishing line ahead of Skullaxe. The Dark Force champion is incensed, claiming Bobby a cheat and swipes his axe again. Just as the axe comes down though he disappears. The Warlord appears to warn Bobby that Skullaxe was the weakest of the Dark Forces and that greater challenges lay ahead.

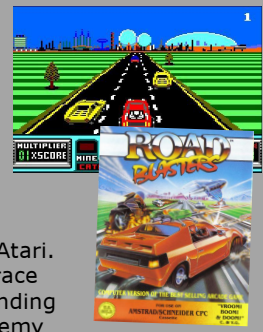
Back at home Bobby gets in some practice on his next challenge, *Thunder Blade*, when he sees a television news item about several missing teenagers. It's the Computer Warriors that Bobby had competed against to become the Ultimate Warrior. Bev, Floyd, Gummer and the rest are reported missing which urges Bobby to continue practising as he feels that the only way to free them is to win these challenges.

The Warlord brings Bobby into the computer's realm and shows him the helicopter named Thunder Blade. Bobby's Dark Forces opponent, General Gor (a horned, reptilian humanoid) soon appears and makes his presence felt. The Warlord explains to Bobby that he must complete three warzones with his five lives. After an encouraging start Bobby loses a life as he veers off course and into a skyscraper. Another two lives are lost when the gunship proves to be a much more formidable opponent. Through grit and determination Bobby eventually destroys the gunship and finishes

the first stage. Fortunately, Bobby makes better progress through the second warzone and destroys the final fortress, all without losing a single life. As Bobby takes on General Gor's airship in the final battle he loses a fourth life. General Gor attempts to ram Bobby's


THE GUNSHIP'S BLOWING UP! YAHOOOOO!
STAGE 1 END
BUT I'VE LOST THREE OF MY FIVE LIVES—AND I'VE ONLY COVERED THE FIRST WARZONE!
HECK! IF I'D ONLY HAD THREE LIVES I'D BE IN THE NIGHTMARE ZONE NOW—AND THE REAL WORLD WOULD BE AT THE MERCY OF THE DARK FORCES!

The games:



Roadblasters (1987)
Developer: Atari
Publisher: Atari Games
Platform: Arcade
(**ports**: Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari Lynx, Atari ST, C64, NES, Mega Drive, ZX Spectrum)

A 1987 arcade game from Atari. The aim of the game is to race through 50 rallies, while fending off attacks from various enemy vehicles. Throughout the race, the player has the ability to change vehicles, but they must keep their fuel topped up or it's game over. Luckily, fuel can be gained along the way by picking up appropriate power up icons or reaching a checkpoint.
Enemy vehicles consist of Stingers, Command Cars (which have bullet proof bumpers), Cycles, and Rat Jeeps, who all do their best to thwart your race. Not surprisingly, US Gold handled the home computer conversions.

ThunderBlade (1988)
Developer: Sega
Publisher: Sega
Platform: Arcade
(**ports:** Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, MSX, Sega Master System, TurboGrafx-16, ZX Spectrum)

One of Sega's biggest arcade games of 1988 where you take control of the ThunderBlade chopper in a third person shoot-'em-up. Taking place in an unknown location, the plot revolves around the fall of the government and the rise of an evil dictatorship, who plan to take over the country. Using ThunderBlade's guns and missiles, you need to take out the enemy's tanks, helicopters, battleships, etc. The game was ported over to most home computers courtesy of US Gold.

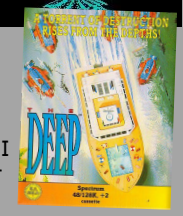
Thunder Blade but Bobby fires off a missile destroying the General Gor's airship in a huge explosion. The explosion rips into Thunder Blade as well. Thinking that he has lost his final life Bobby reappears in the Warlord's keep disappointed. The Warlord congratulates Bobby on his win, explaining the explosion of the airship didn't actually destroy the Thunder Blade at all.

As Bobby spends time on a rowing boat fishing with his friend, Martin French, the Warlord appears in a submarine to summon him for the next test: *The Deep*. Bobby is shown his boat and told of the objectives: defeat the Dark Forces' submarine, surface fleet and rescue hostages trapped on an island. This time there is only one life to complete the game with. The Dark Forces champion, Admiral Two-Face, shakes hands with Bobby and seems pleasant enough, until his head swivels around to reveal a mutated evil face on the other side. Bobby progresses through the game well, taking out enemy submarines and torpedoes with practised skill. As Bobby finishes off the last submarine he picks up the first of the hostages, and is surprised to see that it is Floyd. Floyd explains that all the hostage boats are carrying Computer Warriors: Bev, Gummer and the others. Two-Face made it so that they became the hostages and if any of them are blown up then they die for real. With Floyd helping at the guns the enemy missiles are blown away, making way for the second hostage boat to reach safety. The hostage, Gummer, thanks Bobby for saving him. Floyd attributes Gummer's change in personality to spending time in the Nightmare Zone. Eventually Bobby rescues all the hostages. Bev ends up being the last hostage to board the ship. Bobby isn't pleased at how the lives of the warriors were risked like that; he demands that the Warlord release one of them as proof of his promise to eventually set them all free. The Warlord transports Bobby back to the real world where Martin is still waiting. Thinking that the Warlord would not release any of the warriors, Bobby is surprised to see Gummer appear in the water. They rescue Gummer and help him on his way home.

As Bobby practices for the next test, *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders*, the Warlord appears to tell Bobby to watch out for changes in the test. Bobby ponders this as he walks down the stairs to find his parents acting strangely, tipping him off that the fourth test has already begun. After discovering the first clue, " put a sock in it," Bobby begins to make progress by using the fish bowl as a teleporter. Bobby reappears in a toyshop and hears a toy phone ring. He answers it to hear Vyle, the fourth Dark Forces champion (a reptilian/dinosaur creature) on the other end. Bobby battles through the various locations before finally reaching the "end of the line" where Vyle awaits. Bobby manages to escape the clutches of

The Deep (1988)

Developer:
Cream Corporation
Platforms: Arcade
(**ports:** Amiga, Atari ST, C64, ZX Spectrum)



The Deep is an arcade game—although I don't recall seeing it at all—and was ported over to home computers by US Gold. However, I can't find any reference of it other than it does exist on the Spectrum. What I can make out, you are in control of a ship in the ocean, fending off all kinds of attacks from sea life, as well as enemy submarines and warships. Extra weapons can be picked up by destroying subs and collecting the appropriate flags that they leave behind. A nd that's about it… Probably why no one has heard about this game.

Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders (1988)

Developer:
Lucasfilm Games
Publisher:
Lucasfilm Games
Platform: Commodore 64
(**ports:** Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, FM Towns)

A hugely influential graphical adventure game from Lucasfilm Games (now known as LucasArts). The game takes place in 1997 (nine years into the future—well it was when the game came out) and the world's populous is getting stupid. There's something afoot here, or to be more precise Aliens.

There's only one person who can stop them and that is Zak McKracken, a tabloid news reporter for the National Inquisitor. He finds some people who are willing to help out in his mission, and they must discover the alien defence mechanism, so they can repulse the alien threat. However, the parts are spread all over Earth and need to be tracked down.

Vyle, finds the transmitter (the one that is making the world stupid) and destroys it, winning the game.

While Bobby is back in reality he takes part in an arcade competition and reaches the semi-finals. Bobby takes a bathroom break and the Warlord appears to bring him into the computer's realm for the final contest. The final game is *Forgotten Worlds* and the fifth champion of the Dark Forces is none other than a double of Bobby. As the Warlord explains, the Dark Forces created a computer-generated entity that could match Bobby move for move. The game starts with both Bobby and his double progressing through the game evenly matched. As they both make their way to a weapon shop Bobby's double knocks him over, takes his credits and spends them on weapons, armour and information. This only makes Bobby more determined and he sees the double lose his armour through carelessness with the enemy. The double then tries something else: he turns his gun towards Bobby to tell him that the information he gained was that they could kill each other. Bobby loses a life and they start taking pot shots at each other, totally ignoring the enemy. They are both shot and each of them lose a life. With another sneaky move the double lowers his weapon and walks up to Bobby concealing a rock and manages to knock Bobby over. Just as the double goes in for the final blow Bobby manages to regain his composure and fires, taking out his evil doppelganger for good.

Upon returning to the Warlord's keep Bobby is congratulated on his victory but is more concerned with the Warlord's promise. Bobby proceeds to demand that the Warlord release all the Computer Warriors that have been trapped in the Nightmare Zone. Reluctantly the Warlord delivers on his promise and the Computer Warriors appear from a shimmering hole that comes from nowhere. As they appear it becomes clear that their memories of the experiences of the Nightmare Zone and computer realm have been wiped from their memories. Bobby materializes back to reality discovering that he was disqualified from the arcade competition he was taking part in (he still managed to leave with a hundred pounds for reaching the semi-final round). Feeling elated for the first time in ages Bobby tells Martin that the burgers and shakes are on him.

Forgotten Worlds (1988)
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom
Platform: Arcade
(**ports:** Amiga, Amstrad CPC, C64, Mega Drive/Genesis, Sega Master System, Turbografx-16, ZX Spectrum)

Evil has spread over the planet of Dust World and it's your job to go in and sort things out. A one or two player arcade shoot-'em-up, where your character flies around the screen with the aid of a handy backpack. The five levels consist of shooting down enemy adversaries, collecting power ups, and picking up currency (which can be used to purchase weapons).

Play takes place across many side scrolling landscapes, which feature guardian bosses to defeat. To help with your quest, you have some very nifty moves to take out the enemy; namely, the 360 degrees shooting ability. US Gold handled the home computer ports (with development from Arc Developments), while Sega produced the Mega Drive and Master System versions, and NEC Avenue later produced a version for their Turbografix-16 system.

ATARI STE:
WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

Words by CaptainD, screenshots by Neil Reive,
Atari STE images by vitaflo & ijustwanttouploadphotos

The Atari STE (the E standing for "Enhanced") was released in 1989. This could have (and perhaps should have) marked Atari's resurgence in the 16-bit computer market which was still the dominant computer game market at the time. The STE boasted some extra features (some of which had the potential to seriously challenge the Commodore Amiga) compared to the standard ST/STF/STFM models. Sadly, this machine never even began to live up to its potential and it remains a machine that is known to those few who didn't actually own an ST or Amiga.

The main reasons for the failure of the STe are easy to pinpoint. The new operating system (TOS v.1.62) had a host of compatibility problems with previous ST games. This had the effect of isolating a number of existing owners because users couldn't play many existing standard ST games on their STE. Secondly, the failure to sell enough machines coupled with Atari's reluctance to send out many development machines meant that for a long time the only games you could get for the STE were in fact identical to the games available for the ordinary ST. Why pay for the extra features that were never used?

***Team*, from Impact Software, was a *Sensible Soccer* type game for the Atari STe**

***Obsession* (Unique evelopments) was another early STe dedicated game**

The extra hardware of the STE made it possible to do a lot more though it had its limitations. The STE's BLITTer chip enabled chunks of memory to be thrown about without needing to use the CPU. This was frequently used to get rid of the horrible black border sported by ST games. This was actually possible without the BLITTer chip but it used so much CPU time that it was difficult to do without either slowing down the screen refreshes too much or causing a rather nasty flickering effect. The STE also supported hardware scrolling which meant that smooth scrolling on fast-paced games was possible for the first time.

DMA chips allowed sampled sound to be replayed at up to 50KHz mono / 25MHz stereo and made it possible to use digitised music (again this was already possible but not without overloading the Motorola 68000 CPU). The available colour palette was increased from 512 (3 bits per RGB value) to 4,096 (4 bits per RBG value). This could have been a notable enhancement, one that ended the taunts of Amiga owners whose machines had had much better graphics chips. Sadly the number of colours possibly on-screen at any time remained restricted to 16 in low resolution (320x200). The taunts continued although later on developers would find tricks to have 32 or more colours on screen simultaneously.

In response to the failure of the STE, Atari developed the MegaSTE to be more of a business model. Having a faster CPU (a Motorola 68030 running at 16MHz instead of the normal STE's 8MHz) meant that the new model was geared towards running processor intensive business software rather than gaming software. This was faster than the Amiga's 7.1MHz which was about the only thing we STE owners could really boast about. Very few packages truly made use of the MegaSTE's abilities though if the software was compatible at least the faster processor speed

for a long time, the only games you could get for the STe were in fact identical to the games available for the ordinary ST

***Sleepwalker* (Ocean Software) was one of the few dedicated STe games from any of the big companies**

***Sleepwalker* had you in control of a dog as you safely guided your sleepwalking owner around town**

was easily evident. The MegaSTE seemed to be a replacement for the older Atari TT model. Though it never truly took off, the Motorola 68030 and later microprocessors of the same family became the basis for several new independent breeds of ST-compatible computers like the Medusa, Hades and a host of other machines which usually came out of Germany. Even today the "Atari Coldfire Project" (a volunteer development group that has produced many advanced ST clones) remains active (http://acp.atari.org).

After a time some STE games did ifnally come out. The market was not considered big enough to produce games just for the STe but ST games did begin to appear with expanded options for the STE. These generally simply had better music and sound effects which alone didn't persuade many people to upgrade if they had a normal ST. Public domain and shareware developers, less constricted by financial objectives, made some STe-only games with varying success. Perhaps the most ambitious of these titles was *Hero 2* which in addition to being an STE only game was also the only ST game ever (as far as I know) to need 4Mb of RAM.

Very few big companies ever released STE-only games. The 1993 comic relief game *Sleepwalker* by Ocean Software was the best-known (and perhaps the best). Of course, consoles slowly started to eat up the video game market, so game sales on the Atari and Commodore computers were inevitably going to suffer—the ST market just went downhill quicker. Eventually, but not before the whole ST market had died out, several new developers sprang up producing dedicated STE games—notably *Team* (Impact Software, 1995), *Obsession* and *Substation* (Unique Developments, 1994), *Power Up* (MC Software, 1998). By then the Atari Falcon (sporting far superior graphics, sound, a 32-bit CPU and an ultra-trendy DSP chip) had already been around since 1992, but didn't live up to its promise. Through a combination of ineffective advertising, compatibility problems, dubious hardware decisions and shifting market tendencies, the Falcon was quickly pushed to one side. Atari focused all their attention on their new console; the Jaguar.

If more games had made use of the STE's abilities, maybe the decline of the ST gaming industry would have been slowed down. *Kick Off 2,* with the borders erased using the BLITTer and with sound effects played through the DMA chips, would probably have looked and sounded as good as the Amiga version. The much-maligned *Street Fighter 2* port would have benefited hugely from BLITTed sprites and hardware scrolling—would the SNES owners have been quite so smug if that had been the case? Perhaps it wouldn't have made any difference but I'm sure that everyone who ever owned an STE will have wondered about that question... probably at the point they decided it was time to get a PC, Mac or console of some kind.

***Power Up* by MC Software on the Atari STe**

The Atari STE had a short and somewhat inglorious life. The commendable efforts of certain companies to keep the STE going were a case of too little, too late though not through any fault of their own I might add. I myself coded â•" or started to code—a few ST/STE games that never saw the light of day though I can't claim that they were close to the quality of *Obsession*, et al. Still, the STE definitely has a place in my heart and I think I can speak the same for anyone who ever owned one. In these days of consoles ruling the game sales charts it's nice to reflect on a time when, not only did computer games for various systems sell, but also a time when ST and Amiga owners automatically became hardened enemies.

Public domain and shareware developers,
less constricted by financial objectives,
made some STE-only games with varying success

STEEM: EMULATOR PROFILE

Words by CaptainD, screenshots by Neil Reive

The STEEM Engine is an amazing PC program from Anthony and Russell Hayward that, though it stands for STE Emulator, actually emulates any ST system. While previous emulators such as GEMulator focused on making applications that followed conventional Atari programming rules work, STEEM goes a step further by making almost every game and demo written for the ST work as well.

Achieving this accuracy of emulation is no mean feat as commercial programmers, as well as shareware / freeware developers, delighted in using unconventional methods to push the Atari harder and faster than the original specification allowed for. There were several hardware specifications for different models. Disks came in difference specifications: programs such as FastCopy3 made it possible to extend the normal 720K floppy by formatting the disk with extra tracks / sectors per track. American and European programs systems and programs could have major differences. None of this appears to stop the STEEM Engine's progress; I've tried it on a number of games without finding one that wouldn't work. Even the old MIDI sequencers are reported to work perfectly happily under the environment. All three screen resolutions are supported, so applications that only ran in medium or high-res aren't a problem.

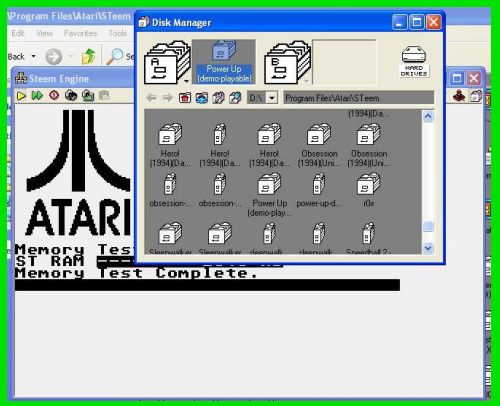
Getting started with STEEM is extremely simple as the process is relatively fool proof. The first thing you need to do is unzip the STEEM package and TOS file (The Operating System) into a folder of your choice. Once you run STEEM for the first time, a welcome message will appear where you are asked to select the TOS file (choose TOS 1.02). Although, you can also configure STEEM for use with a virtual hard drive, that's basically the emulator set up ready to start running ST. Click on the play button to start the emulation. With Atari's TOS up and running (with its familiar green desktop), your mouse has now locked into the program as you control the emulated Atari ST mouse cursor. Pressing the Pause/Break key will return control back to Windows' mouse cursor, while STEEM continues in the background.

So, how do you actually play the games? The program uses ST disk images with an ".ST" extension, which are available from a huge variety of places on the net—STEEM's website has links to hundreds of them. There are also instructions on how to make your own disk images from original ST disks. The possibilities for Atari fans are practically limitless. Once you have the ST disk images available, you need to save them onto your hard drive, preferably in folder where

STEEM boots up and you're greeted with the familiar green desktop of the Atari ST

***Populous* running on STEEM**

Smashing fun on STEEM with *Shufflepuck Cafe*



STEEM's Disk Manager in use as the disk images are swapped around

I've tried [STEEM] on a number of games without finding one that wouldn't work. Even the old MIDI sequencers are reported to work perfectly

The true classic games remain just as playable as ever, and when you play them on STEEM, they look, sound, and play just like they did in the old days

STEEM is located. Running games is simply a matter of dragging the disk image onto STEEM's window and away we go.

Of course, there are occasions where you might not want to mirror the ST's specs exactly, like when a game is loading or unpacking. Happily, you can toggle the CPU speed, the ST's 8MHz, and whatever your computer can cope with. So with a modern PC unpacking the largest of games should take seconds at most.

Joysticks can be configured, as most games for the ST would be fiddly to play without a joystick, or, since the most optimistic efforts at using an analogue joystick to emulate a digital joystick may well fail, keys can be configured instead. In fact, a bewildering array of ports and devices can be configured if you so wish.

So what else can STEEM do? Well, there are the usual functions such as "Reset" (pressing the red circle button with the left button will cause a cold reset, while a right button press will produce a warm reset). There's the highly useful "Load/Save memory snapshot" function (camera and chip button), where you can save and retrieve your progress in a certain game or program. You can take screenshots during play of any game with a click of the "camera and screen" button—although this can be configured so just a key press is needed. This will save a BMP image onto your STEEM's screenshot folder, and with third party FreeImage library (also available from STEEM's website), you can choose other image formats such as JPG, PNG, and more.

The Disk Manager allows you to control and configure all the disks on the emulated ST, including disk images, hard drives. The CPU speed, memory size, and monitor type can also be adjusted to suit your needs. The controls—joystick and keyboard—are fully customisable, and there is even support for cartridge image functionality. However, all this just scratches the surface of STEEM's abilities and functions as there are countless more features within this package.

Though the emulator hasn't been updated for quite a while, and doesn't claim to work with Vista, it has no noticable problems with it (once DirectDraw was disabled). Admittedly, some games, which were fondly remembered, look and sound pretty bad, but that's part of the unique joy of retrogaming. Anyway, the true classic games remain just as playable as ever, and when you play them on STEEM, they look, sound, and play (lack of digital joystick aside) just like they did in the old days. *Populous, Shufflepuck Cafe, Supercars, Xenon 2*... they all remain instantly playable and it certainly didn't feel like over a decade since they were last played. Somehow, even the epilepsy-inducing flicker in *Kick Off* inflicts nostalgic feelings...

Because the STEEM Engine always runs in a window and simply resizes the contents to whatever window size you use, Vista's curious incapability to run in 320x200 resolution is no problem at all.

If you own a PC, have fond memories of the Atari ST (any model) and want to relive those happy days, the STEEM Engine is a priceless piece of software. Even better as freeware, it's genuinely without price.

***Super Cars* running smoothly in STEEM**

***Kick Off* running in STEEM with irritating flicker and all**

STEEM is **closed-source freeware**.

The authors are Anthony and Russell Hayward.

Steem is available for Windows and Linux.

The UK and USA versions of TOS 1.02 and 2.06 are available for download from the STEEM website.

The Official STEEM Website: **http://steem.atari.st/**

How to cause a COMPLETE CONTROVERSY

Words & screenshots by **Ack**

DETAILS

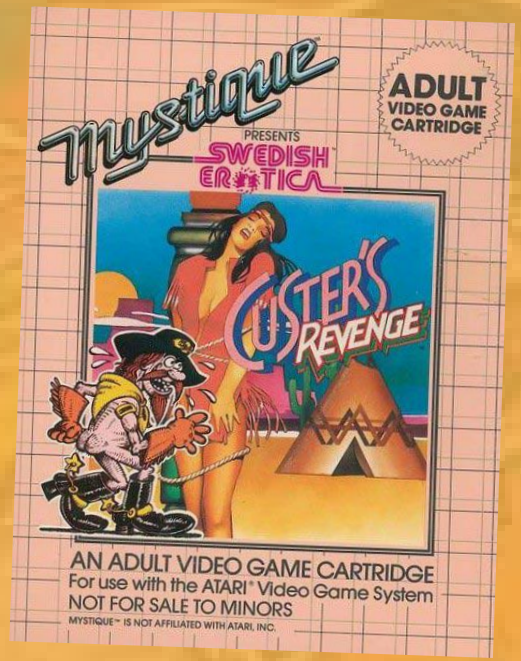
Developer:	Mystique
Publisher:	Mystique
Released:	1982
Platform:	Atari 2600
Genre:	Erm...

In 1980, a group of Atari employees, fed up with working conditions and wanting to see if they could make it on their own, broke off and formed Activision, the first third-party game developer in video game history. Atari made an attempt in court to shut Activision down, failed this attempt, and the floodgates opened to every other corporation or random joe who'd been eying the lucrative video game industry, and third-party developers rushed in to make as much money as possible. Some companies included people with industry knowledge and experience, such as Imagic, composted of former Atari and Mattel employees. Others were businesses that had no business being in the market at all, like Quaker Oats' short-lived video game division.

One of these businesses was a company that produced pornography, Caballero Control Corporation, under parent company American Multiple Industries. When Caballero decided to get in on the video game industry, employees formed a small subsidiary company named Mystique with the sole purpose of creating video games for adult audiences, and the porn game was born. Mystique would only make it for a year, forming in 1982 and dying out in the video game crash of 1983, but they left a legacy that has since helped to cripple the game industry for years, even though they produced only a handful of games: *Bachelor Party*, *Beat 'Em & Eat 'Em*, and *Custer's Revenge*. All three would be labeled "Swedish Erotica," the name of a popular adult film series by Caballero.

Of these, *Custer's Revenge* would attract the most ire. Players controlled General George Custer, who was killed in the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876 while fighting a force of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho warriors. In the United States, the battle is often referred to as Custer's Last Stand. The subject is bizarre for a pornographic game, and the plot not much better. In *Custer's Revenge*, Custer must cross a field while arrows are being fired at him. Custer is mostly nude, wearing just a hat and neckerchief as well as a pair of boots, and is also sexually aroused. His reward for making it across is to proceed to have sex with Revenge, a large-breasted Native American woman apparently tied to a post. Once the player made it across the field to Revenge, they would then have to quickly press the fire button on the joystick to cause Custer to thrust into her, gaining points in the process.

Because the woman makes no movements and has her hands forced behind her, and because the line "she's not about to take it lying down, by George! Help is on the way" appeared on the back of the packaging, several women's rights groups such as Women Against Pornography and the National Organization for Women, as well as the American Indian Community House, protested against the game. When the game was given a demonstration at the New York Hilton in October, 1982, around 250 members of these groups, as well as members of the Racial Justice Committee of the National YWCA, appeared to protest it, specifically for its rape connotations. Protests by these groups occurred in other sections



The game's artwork shows exactly what you're in for. It does exactly what is says on the tin

OK, we'll give this thing a go then...

Ouch! Bloody arrows falling from the sky are lethal to our naked little chum

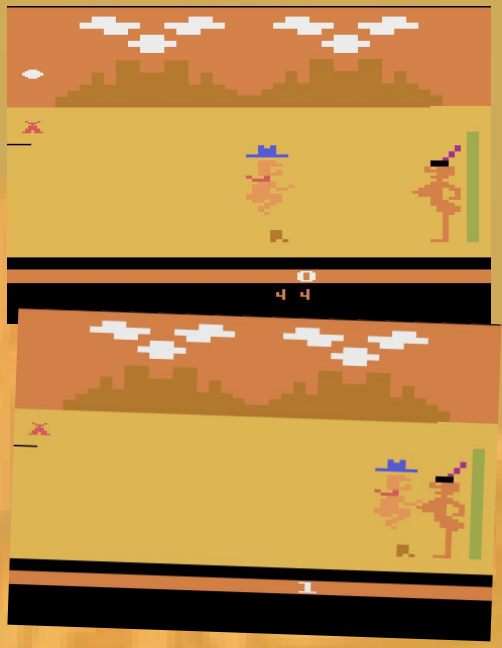
Nevermind, we'll try again. Hurrah! We're finally there... All the way from one side to the other

members of the Racial Justice Committee of the National YWCA appeared to protest it, specifically for its rape connotations

Ahem. Yes, well, I think we all know what's going on here. Move along...

Oh, a different level, eh? What do we do on this one, then?

Wait a minute... Isn't this just the same as the last level?



You what? It's a different level because the background colour has changed?

of the nation, and many video game retailers refused to stock the item, while others kept it hidden behind sales counters and only allowed its sale if specifically asked for by name. In a letter published in 1986 by Andrea Dworkin, it was even alleged that *Custer's Revenge* had led to the gang raping of multiple Native American women. For their part, Mystique spokesmen maintained that the sex in the game was completely consensual.

Inevitably, Atari ended up being pulled into the fray when protestors began blaming them for allowing the game to be published on their console (which was actually something they had no control over after they lost the case against Activision). Atari then took Mystique and American Multiple Industries to court, claiming wrongful association and that the two companies were unlawfully profiting off Atari's name and trademarks. Mystique wouldn't last much longer anyway, going out of business in 1983. The rights to its games, including those that weren't yet finished, were then sold to Playaround, a company formed from the people who had worked at Mystique.

Playaround opted to release alternate gender versions of their games, so instead of playing male characters often after females, it would be female characters after males. To do this, they designed double-ended cartridges, featuring one version on each end. *Custer's Revenge* would see this change in the games *Westward Ho!* and *General Retreat*. *Westward Ho!* played exactly the same as *Custer's Revenge*, except this time Revenge would wave her arm in front of her and call Custer over. That way, the company could claim she desired the intercourse so they wouldn't get into trouble. General Retreat reversed the gender roles, so that this time Revenge had to cross a field while cannon balls were fired at her. She would then proceed to have sex with Custer, who was now tied to a pole. But due to complaints, the ongoing protests against *Custer's Revenge*, and the overall negative opinion of the original game, Playaround decided against releasing the title in the US, and it was only put out in European markets.

Custer's Revenge would have a major impact on video game history, albeit unintentionally. First, it would help the first real anti-video game protest movements that have continued on to this day. Two, because of the trouble given Atari, a certain Japanese company named Nintendo that had been watching the situation decided it would be a good idea to regulate what games appeared on their console when it was eventually released, so they created strict rules about the number of releases and the number of games manufactured. And third, *Custer's Revenge* was also the first game to actually be helped by controversy. Mystique's other games averaged 40,000 sales. *Custer's Revenge* sold twice as many, even with all the bad press, because the public was more aware of the game. This would be the start of a trend that continues on and has even become a business strategy for some games.

members of the Racial Justice Committee of the National YWCA appeared to protest it, specifically for its rape connotations

MAGIC The Gathering

Words & screenshots by **Duncan Rule**

DETAILS

Developer:	Microprose
Publisher:	Microprose
Released:	1997
Platform:	PC Windows
Genre:	Strategy

If you consider yourself a bit of a geek, or you grew up during the '90s (or both), then you'll most likely have encountered the trading card game *Magic: the Gathering* at some point on your travels through the realms of geekdom. *Magic* was created by Richard Garfield and introduced on general release by Wizards of the Coast in 1993. Probably the most popular and well-loved of all trading card games (TCG or CCG for Collectible Card Games), *Magic* draws upon classic high-fantasy type role playing games (such as *Dungeons & Dragons*) for its subject matter and setting. The game pits two or more players (acting as wizards) against each other in a fight to the death (accomplished by lowering your opponent's life total to zero or less, causing them to run out of cards, or an assortment of less-frequently seen special conditions).

Players construct decks of cards based around two core card types: lands, which are used to draw power or "mana" (needed to cast spells), and spells, which encompass all other card types in the game, such as creatures, sorceries, artefacts and enchantments. These decks are then played off against one another in order to determine a victor. The skill in the game comes from the use of strategy and an understanding of what both you and your opponents' decks are capable of, and herein lays the real fun of what appears to be a very simple game on the surface.

With the popularity of *Magic* exploding at an exponential rate during the mid-'90s, it was only a matter of time before Garfield's game made the transition to the electronic medium. The first *Magic* computer game was *Magic: the Gathering - Battlemage*, which appeared on the PlayStation and subsequently the PC in 1996 and 1997 respectively. This was a curious hybrid of *Magic*-esque game mechanics in a more straightforward action/strategy world. *Battlemage* was closely followed by MicroProse's *Magic: the Gathering* on PC in 1997.

Unlike *Battlemage*, MicroProse's effort (incidentally the last game the great Sid Meier would ever work on at MicroProse) was more or less a straight conversion of the card game itself to the electronic format. And

what a conversion it is; if you've ever enjoyed a game of *Magic* with actual cards but either couldn't be bothered with, or couldn't afford to keep up with the ever-changing tournament legal card list and constant expansion sets, this is the game for you. As long as you're at least somewhat familiar with the rules of *Magic*, you'll be able to come to grips with the game immediately. Thankfully, annoying little mechanics, sub-rules and more complex stuff are taken care of by the game engine so you only have to worry about what you're seeing on screen.

The game itself is divided up into various separate components that operate as a cohesive whole through the main title screen. If you're just after a quick game or two, you can fire up the Duel mode and pit yourself in a battle with either a computer controlled opponent or another human player. Playing against the computer is a somewhat different experience from a casual game of *Magic* against friends as it will mostly try to damage you any way it can each turn without biding its time to see what you're going to attempt. It's still a worthy adversary however, and with a huge library of pre-made decks coming with the game (in addition to any you create yourself) there are endless gameplay variations to be had.

There are several game options along with many variatons of cards available

The game screen is split into two halves horizontally, one area for each player's hand, in-play cards, library, graveyard and life total. Your view of your opponents half is of course limited, as you can only view cards they currently have in play, their life total and their graveyard (cards removed from play), much the same as a real game of *Magic*.

Magic: the Gathering also features a single player campaign mode for those looking for something a little more in depth. This places players in the plain of Shandalar; an overhead (randomly-generated) role-playing world that players must traverse while defeating ever more powerful enemies and wizards via battles in the form of games of *Magic*. You begin with a random selection of cards and can acquire more by defeating enemies and purchasing them in the various cities that litter the game. Shandalar also includes a selection of dungeons and quests to be accomplished which give the game an extra role-playing edge.

One of the greatest aspects of the game (at least for old-school *Magic: the Gathering* fans) will be the included "deck builder" which surprisingly enough allows you to construct your own decks with any (legal) combination of cards you wish. Despite the fact that the game was released in 1997 (and an updated version with extra cards in 1999), many of the later expansion sets of the time are missing from the game, with the latest cards available coming from *The Dark* expansion set. All of the cards from the early core sets are present which means the dream of many a *Magic* player will come true when they realise the cards that are on offer. Many of those included in this game are long out of print in their physical form and can go for hundreds if not thousands of dollars to collectors due to their rarity and power in-game. *Magic: the Gathering*, however, lets you use any of these in your deck - for free! Fancy a deck with four copies of *Black Lotus* in it? Go right ahead! This feature of the game is even better in 2009 than it was back when the game was released and these cards still hadn't reached the insane prices of today.

There is also a single player campaign option

Let the battle commence, big time

Admittedly the graphics here aren't exactly that amazing (even for the time) but this is after all just a card game and so can't be judged too harshly. That said, all of the wonderful original artwork featured on the real cards (painted by top fantasy artists) is here and certainly livens things up a bit (not to mention providing a great sense nostalgia). The game also features support for network play via the included *Manalink* program but I haven't managed to get this working myself as the game dates from the earlier Windows days and takes a bit of fiddling with to get working on modern systems.

This game really is mandatory playing for anyone interested in *Magic: the Gathering*, TCGs in general, or even just strategy games. It can be tricky to track down and will require a small amount of work on your part unless you happen to be using a particularly ancient PC. The results will be well worth the effort. *Magic: the Gathering* is a truly forgotten classic.

This game really is mandatory playing for anyone interested in *Magic: the Gathering*, TCGs in general, or even just strategy games

RETRO FANZINES

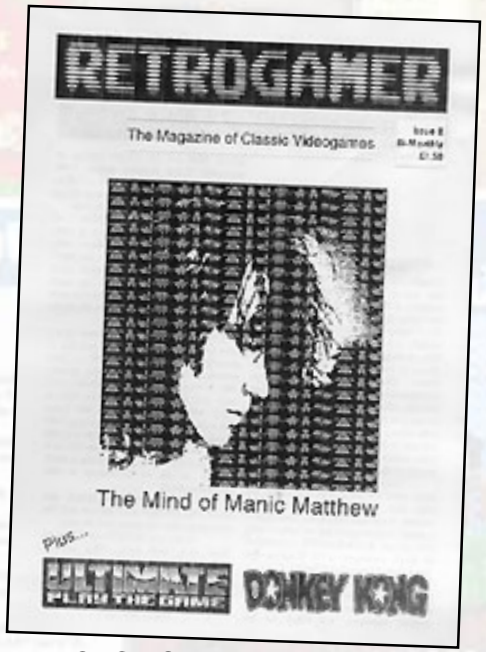
Words & screenshots by Neil Reive
images © respective publication

Retrogaming enthusiasts have been creating their own publications for over 20 years. We took a look at some of these retrogaming magazines...

RETRO FANZINES

Zines, often coming in various guises (fanzine, ezine, diskzine), are publications produced by a fan (or fans) of a particular subject. Fanzines mainly consist of printed or digital publications and are traditionally distributed free of charge to a fairly small readership.

A diskzine, or diskmag, is a magazine distributed in electronic form to be read using computers. This format of publication was most prevalent during the 1980s and 1990s. They are quite a different breed to print or digital magazines in that they are published on a disk and can only be accessed by using it in conjunction with the computer it was developed for. Reading a diskmag involves navigating an onscreen menu system. The media used for this type of magazine ranges from cassette tape, diskette, and CD. Since the appearance of the Internet, diskmags have virtually disappeared. There were many diskmags released during the 1980s and 1990s. So many in fact that we don't have time to mention them all.



The rise of the internet meant that anyone with the appropriate DTP or HTML software and design skills could produce zines for worldwide publication. These HTML or PDF zines are largely better designed than their fanzine descendents and include more pictures, colour and images.

Retrogamer (not to be confused with the commercially available *Retro Gamer* that launched in 2004) started out in 1995 and ran for 28 issues. The multi-format fanzine included articles, interviews and reviews on a variety of computers and consoles. The *RG* fanzine website contains links to back issues which can be purchased for a small fee. The magazine's editor, Keith Ainsworth, also wrote the Retro pages column for a couple of years during the late 1990s in the commercial mag *Computer and Video Games*.

Commodore Zone was a print-based magazine devoted to the C64 and was created in 1995 to fill the void left by the demise of UK based C64 mags. Each issue came in the form of an A5 booklet featuring news, games reviews, PD reviews, interviews, tutorials and much more. After coming to an end in 2001, 16 issues of *CZ* had been produced in total, each coming with a special covermount disk. A special *Commodore Zone* 10th Anniversary CD-ROM is available from the Commodore Zone website containing all scanned issues, covermounts and more.

Computer Scene was another C64 magazine produced after the demise of the commercial mags in 1995.

Originally a small black and white photocopied magazine, *Computer Scene* changed its name to *Commodore Scene*. The appearance of its printed pages evolved through the years, from photocopy style pages to digital format. After a drop in subscribers the magazine ceased with issue 52 in 2007. A selection of past issues and content can be downloaded from the *CS* website.

One of the longest running zines must surely be *Retrogaming Times Monthly,* which is (at time of writing) notching up its 62nd issue. With 80 issues of its predecessor, *Retrogaming Times*, that comes to over 140 (1997-present) total issues. The monthly HTML zine covers all computer and console games with articles, reviews and more. The newly acquired domain (www.retrogamingtimes.com/) also promises to house all back issues in their archive section.

The German print based *Amiga Future*, initially published by IPC and created by APC&TCP (a former user group) in June 1998, is still being produced today. The prominently games based magazine is geared

towards the new generation of Amiga users who have upgraded their machine with memory, graphics cards and processors. Each issue comes with a covermount CD which has even included some commercial games. The bi-monthly magazine is still running and is available through subscription at their website (amigafuture.de/).

Total Amiga was a printed Amiga magazine published between October 1998 and April 2007. The magazine covered Amiga news, reviews, hints, tips and tutorials. Initially, the magazine went under the name *Clubbed* until its name change to *Total Amiga* for issue 10. The magazine was available by subscription, but a selection of the back issues can be downloaded in PDF from their website. With the release of issue 26 the makers announced that they would cease publication.

MyAtari was an online magazine for Atari enthusiasts published between October 2000 and February 2005 with over 60 issues released. The magazine contained the usual mix of articles, reviews, news and tutorials. Each issue is archived online and can be downloaded from their website to view offline as HTML.

Lotek64 is a German based magazine for older game consoles and home computers. Because of its wide popularity, the Commodore 64 is the main focus for the articles but other systems are not excluded. *Lotek64* was first published in 2002, is released quarterly, and is still running today's issue 29 (March 2009) being the latest edition. The printed version is available to purchase while the PDF version can be downloaded for free. Both editions can be found at lotek64.com.

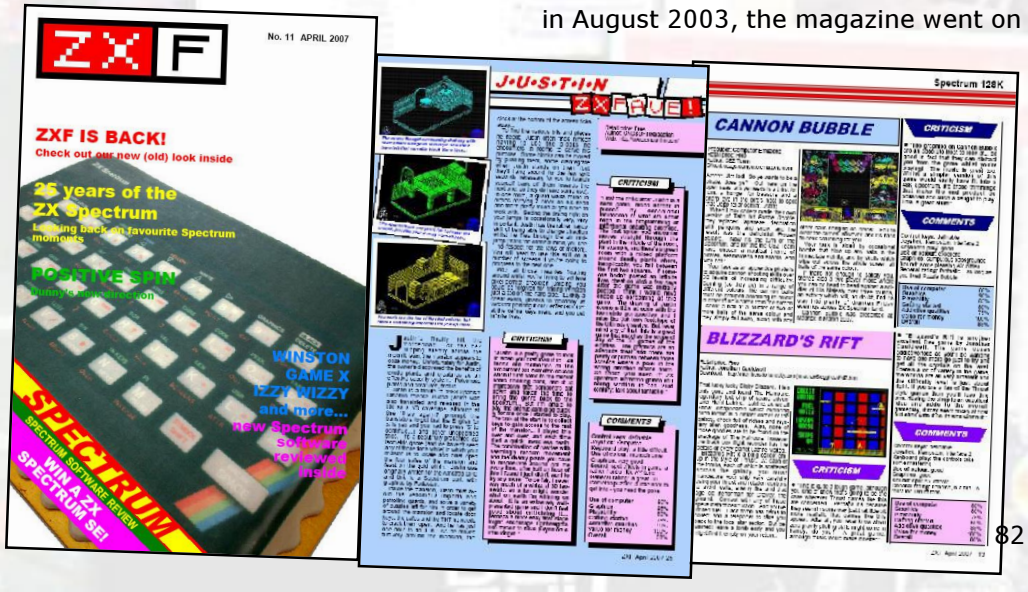
ZX Format covered the ZX Spectrum and ZX81 Sinclair computers. It featured news, reviews, articles, interviews and more. The magazine ran for 11 issues beginning with a special 20th Spectrum anniversary issue in the summer of 2002 and ended on April 2007 with issue 11. All issues can be found on the magazine's website.

Retro Review was a multi-format print-based subscription magazine that was launched in 2003 and ran for five issues. The magazine featured articles, reviews, interviews and much more on all things retro. Although available through subscription as print only, subscribers were also given a PDF version for each issue, all of which were later made available to download from the *Retro Review* website.

Classic Gamer Magazine was initially a print base magazine that began in 2003 and covered all things retrogaming. Volume one of the magazines (six issues) is available for purchase on CD from the magazine's website. The second run of the magazine (volume two) contained two PDF issues which are both available to download from the *CG* website for free. No further issues have been produced since.

MagazineZX was a bimonthly Spanish ZX Spectrum PDF magazine from Speccy.org. The first issue was launched in July 2003. The magazine ran for 16 issues, with the last one released in January 2008. The magazine covered all aspects of Spectrum computing from games and reviews, to news and hardware features. All back issues can be downloaded from the Speccy.org website.

RetroRevival was a multimedia retro magazine that, not only featured a healthy dose of retrogaming, but that also included retrofilms, retroTV and retromusic. The retrogaming features weren't just the usual games reviews either, they included articles on MAME arcade cab building, gaming loft conversions and more. Launched in August 2003, the magazine went on



until August 2005, producing four issues in that time. *RetroFusion*, which could be seen as the spiritual successor to *RetroRevival*, was then launched with issue zero in December 2005. This printed magazine featured much the same content as *RetroRevival* but was backed by Gamestation, and was on sale from their stores nationwide. This publication too was cut short, ending with issue two.

ZX Spectrum Files (which can be found here) is a quarterly PDF magazine in Spanish which was launched in January 2005 featuring news, reviews, articles and more. Initially, the magazine was designed with an old fashioned fanzine photocopy style front cover. Their 13th, and most recent, March 2009 issue (which arrived almost a full year after issue 12) has been completely redesigned. The main difference being the magazine's change to a landscape orientation.

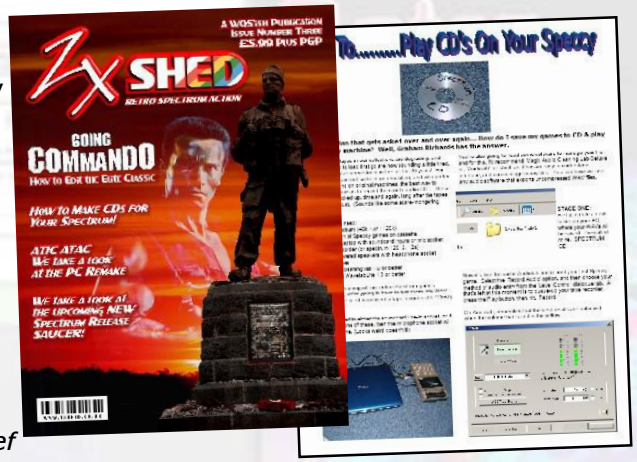
CPC Oxygen is the home of the *Amstrad Action* scanning project and was responsible for getting all 117 issues online. Not only that but they have an HTML magazine which started in January 2002 as a monthly zine which later went quarterly. The magazine stopped for a time with issue 13 (Spring 2005) before making a comeback with issue 14 in February 2009. A 2004 yearbook was also released. The magazine has recently resurfaced after a four-year absence. All *CPC Oxygen* issues including the yearbook can be found at their website.

Zzap!64 has had two community-produced tribute magazines (issue 107 appeared in 2002 and *The Def Tribute to Zzap!64* in 2005). Issue 107 covered some of the happenings since the commercial magazine's demise in 1994 and reviewed a handful of homebrew games. *The Def Tribute to Zzap!64* included a feature on *Zzap!64*, interviews with some of the original staff, retrospective articles, news and more. Both issues can be downloaded from Zzap64.co.uk.

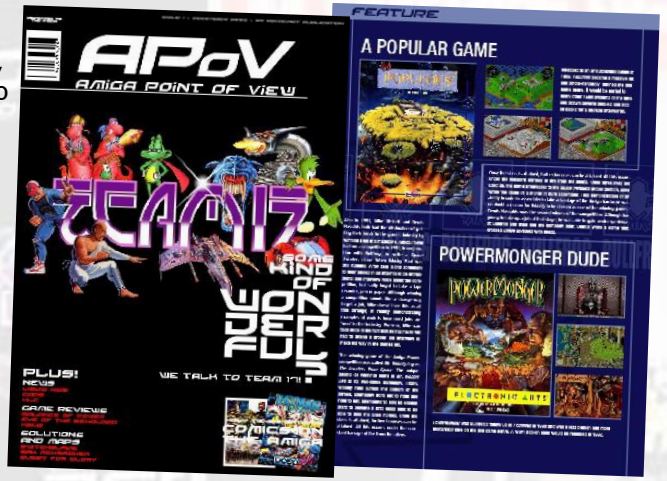
APoV (*Amiga Point of View*) is predominantly a games magazine with features reviews, articles, interviews and more. Issue one was released in December 2003, issue 2 in July 2004 and issue 3 came out in November 2008. With such an irregular release schedule, it is unclear whether further issues will be produced. All three PDF issues can be downloaded for free at apov.abime.net.

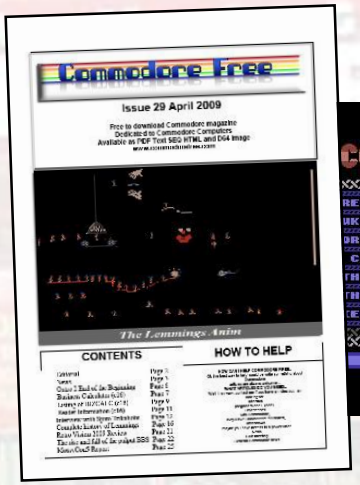
Video Game Collector was essentially a price guide and checklist for major video game systems and games from Atari to Xbox, with almost 10,000 games listed and priced. However, the magazine, which was launched in 2005 also included articles, reviews, interviews and more. With the last issue released in 2008 it seems as though the magazine has ceased publication. Past issues can be ordered through their website.

ZX Shed is an irregular released ZX Spectrum magazine which started out around 2005. Regular content includes news, reviews, articles and more. Although in print format, the magazine is also available to download for free from The World of Spectrum website. After disappearing following issue 3 in 2007, the publication returned in July 2009 as a bi-monthly publication containing the same old mix of Spectrum content previously provided.


ZX SHED
RETRO SPECTRUM ACTION
GOING COMMANDO
How to Make CDs for Your Spectrum!
ATIC ATAC We take a look at the PC Remake
We take a look at the upcoming NEW Spectrum Release SAUCER!
To.....Play CDs On Your Speccy

The *Gamer's Quarter* magazine was a quarterly publication which ran from 2005 to 2007. Each issue was produced as a downloadable PDF although a book/magazine edition was also made available to purchase. Each issue contained indepth articles and features on all manor of retrogaming. All back issues, PDF and printed, are





still available to download or purchase respectively from their website.

Commodore Free, which launched in 2006, is truly a unique magazine as it is released in PDF, HTML, D64 (C64 disk image), SEQ (ASCII file format) and text format—surely a first in magazine publication. As the title might suggest, *Commodore Free* is a free magazine devoted to all things Commodore, with articles, reviews, interviews and tutorials appearing in each issue. Current and back issues can be viewed/downloaded from their website.

NintendoAge, which started in September 2007, is a free monthly e-zine that focuses on everything Nintendo. Most of its content is produced by the Nintendo community and features articles, interviews, the *NintendoAge* price guide, and much more. This e-zine is still running and has—at time of writing—amassed 22 issues. The PDF issues are available to download from their website.

Video Game Trader is a bi-monthly print/digital magazine devoted to classic video games and the systems that play them. Launched in 2007, *VGTrader* contains reviews, articles, interviews and more. Each issue also contains the *Video Game Trader* price guide which contains over 6,000 prices for games and consoles. Subscription to either PDF or print format is available on the website. Older issues can be read online with Flash Player software.

SCACOM (Stefans Commodore Amiga Computer Online Museum) is the name of a Commodore magazine that began in 2007. One version is published in English and the other in German. While the English edition lasted four issues, the German version is still running after 13 issues. The English version was quite irregular where as the German version is bi-monthly. Both versions of the magazine are free to download in archive or PDF formats.

NA
Ultimate FROGGER Champion
INSIDE
Everything you ever wanted to know about Ultimate Frogger Champion
Also articles from Rubin, dangeVin, and more!

Retro is the name of a multi-format retrogaming magazine from Germany. Launched in 2007, the magazine is still running with its most recent, issue 12. It is available in print form from retro-magazin.de. Back issues in PDF format, along with a CD-ROM, are also available to purchase.

Pix'n Love is a French retrogaming mook (magazine/book) that is published quarterly. The mook, which launched in 2007, contains over 100 pages, has its own regular sections including Generation Retro, Arcade, Consoles, Micros, Retropinions and News Pix'n Love. The A5 mook can be ordered from their website for •9.00 EUR.

Bytemaniacos is a Spanish PDF fanzine covering 8-bit systems and features a landscape design layout. There have been six issues produced so far, with each one containing news, articles, reviews and more. The issues are not dated, but seeing as issue one covers retrogaming conventions in 2007 it is safe to presume that it premiered in that year (also the PDF file properties state October 2007). The last issue, no. 6, was released in November 2008. The issues are available to download from their website.

RGCD, today's only published discmag, was launched in 2007 and contains reviews on indie games and homebrew games on old computers. Each issue is released as an ISO file (which you can burn to CD) or as lite download archives (which can be viewed as HTML files). All five issues produced so far can be downloaded for free from their website.

C&A Fan is a Polish magazine dedicated to Commodore's two most popular computers: the C64 and Amiga. Also known as *Commodore & Amiga Fan*, the magazine has been running since 2007 and issue 4 has recently been released. You can download the digital version of the magazine from here.

Amigahellas caters to the Greek Amiga community and features content on new software, demos, meetings, games and technical articles. Yes, it's in Greek, but if there is enough interest, the authors will release the articles in English. The magazine can be downloaded here in low-res or glorious high-res PDF.

Amstrad Action also received its own tribute magazine which included a retrospective article on the history of the magazine, interviews with a handful of staff members, game reviews from the past decade, articles and more. The magazine can be downloaded here.

Classic Video Gamer Magazine (*ClassicVGM*), which was recently launched in May 2009, is a print/digital magazine that covers all retro console systems with articles, reviews and more. The PDF and print versions are both available to order from the website.

Many zines have come, and just as many have gone. One thing is certain; as long as retrogamers have the desire to write about retro games, the zine format will survive in one form or another.

UNSENSIBLE WORLD OF CANNON MOON SOCCER MEETS BULLDOG BLIGHTY

Words & screenshots by **Duffman**
images © respective publication

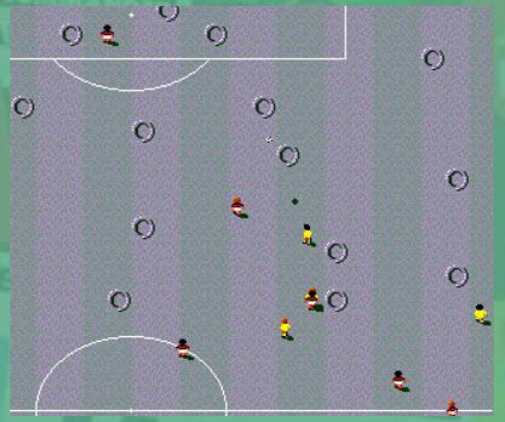
Sensible Software mashed up their two popular games, *Sensible Soccer* and *Cannon Fodder*, for various Amiga magazine coverdisks during the 1990s, with hilarious consequences. We pick up the trail of the coverdisks to re-discover works of brilliance

Following up their earlier efforts on *Mircoprose Soccer*, Sensible Software developed *Sensible Soccer* for the Amiga in 1992. The game featured a zoomed out bird's-eye view of the pitch, enabling you see a large portion of the pitch: where your immediate teammates were, where the opposition were—this is vital for playing a successful passing game. The control method was realistic. If you turned sharply you would lose the ball from your feet and if you aimed a shot at the corner flag—by accident, of course—then damn it, the ball would go towards the corner flag. There was no computer assisted shooting to spoil the realism here.

Constantly discussed amongst gamers as being the best football game ever, *Sensible Soccer*, was improved upon by several sequels, reaching its zenith with *Sensible World of Soccer*. In *Sensible World of Soccer* the classic football game was merged with simple, but rewarding, management elements. While today's generation of younger gamers are fighting over *FIFA 23* or *Pro Evo 17*, they are really fighting over second and third place. Nothing comes close to *SWOS'* perfect blend of arcade/strategy/management aspects.

I still remember trying to coax my best friend into playing *Sensible Soccer*. Once the game had started, he jokingly asked where the guns and choppers were. Yes, *Sensible Soccer* looks similar to *Cannon Fodder*—which he was referring to—as they both used the same graphics engine.

Cannon Fodder is an excellent, real time strategy game with a wicked dark sense of humour. Humorously enough the game was criticised for glamorising war. That couldn't be further from the truth as *Cannon Fodder* contrasts moments of wit with dark sombre moments. Who can forget the "Boot Hill" where you see more and more tombstones appear, or the names of the dead that slowly scroll up the screen every time you finish a mission. What about the screams of pain as one of your colleagues lies mortally wounded? War is hell and that is demonstrated here.



Punting the ball up high on the moon pitch

Watch out for the craters, as they can be dangerous

Footballing hijinks from 1914, complete with exploding grenade used as the ball

Don't adjust the screen, it's authentic monochrome 1966 style TV picture

Guiding Graham's Giftless Grafters to victory over Germany in 1993

While there were numerous follow ups for *Sensible Soccer* and a sequel to *Cannon Fodder*, Sensible Software liked to play about with their titles and weren't afraid to muck around for the sake of some good humoured fun. Four spin-offs, based on these two popular Sensible Software titles were produced in the early nineties. All were given away as covermounts on some of the more popular Amiga magazines at the time.

What better way to top those two excellent games than by mashing them together in a hybrid of football and violence? *Sensible Soccer* clashed with *Cannon Fodder* in *Sensible Soccer 92/92 Meets Bulldog Blighty* (a.k.a. *Sensible Soccer: England vs Germany*) in *Amiga Power*'s January 1993 cover disk. This is your chance to re-play that England vs Germany match of 1993 or to go back to 1944 and

play a variation on that match. You can even relive the classic world cup match of 1966 (which is played in an authentic monochromatic format).

Arguably, the most interesting option of the three is the 1944 game. Two teams of soldiers play out the 1944 match and it doesn't have yellow or red cards. It does however use an unstable hand grenade in place of the ball. These changes aside, the match plays as normal. The odd way the grenade bounces around may be a little disconcerting to begin with but you only need to panic when the grenade starts to glow. This means that it will explode, in short order, taking any nearby soldiers with it. A free kick is then given to the team who suffered the casualty and any players that are lost in action are lost for the duration of the match. Do try not to get them all blown up!

The wackiest spin-off released was *UnSensible Soccer,* which appeared on the *Amiga Action* cover disk in March 1993. The idea is to win by scoring a goal—first to score wins. The twist to this demo is that you can be either a team comprising of apples or oranges, capably supported by pears in goal. It's some sight, seeing apples and oranges playing a football match. The only downside to this spin-off is the rather short life span of the game. If you'd rather play a traditional match then you can play as Norwich City against the might of Manchester United in this rather one-sided battle.

Returning to the *Cannon Fodder* meets *Sensible Soccer* theme, Sensible then developed another mini game, this time for *Amiga Format*'s Christmas Special in 1993. *Cannon Fodder - Amiga Format Christmas Special* (a.k.a. *Cannon Soccer*) features two levels "Land of Hope and Glory" and "It's Snow Time". The first level has you controlling a group of soldiers as they make their way over a football pitch, fighting against football players with a bad attitude. To make matters worse, an army helicopter will close in on your men, dropping bombs, making you constantly keep on the move until the mission is completed. The second level, as the title might suggest, has your soldiers negotiate up a snowy landscape with the mission being to destroy everything in sight: buildings, helicopters, people. Total mayhem.

Released a year later as *Amiga Action*'s 1994 Xmas coverdisk, was *Sensible World of Moon Soccer* (a.k.a. *Sensible Moon*). Here, the football match takes place on the moon and features such elements as low gravity and moon craters. While the low gravity isn't too much of a problem to deal with, the craters certainly are. If the ball bounces onto one of the craters it will veer off at a random angle causing endless amounts of confusion. A superb idea that could have been taken further.

Kaboom! An explosion rips open the pitch as you gun down the goalkeeper. Who needs fan riots?

The chopper hunts you down as the villagers get massacred

Manchester United score against the footballing might of... Norwich

Apples and Oranges go face to face as the Pears tend the goal

DETAILS

Developer: Sensible Software

Platform: Amiga

Emulator: WinUAE

Weblinks:

Cannon Fodder - Amiga Format Christmas Special, *Amiga Format*, issue 54, Christmas 1993 coverdisk

Sensible Soccer 92/93 Meets Bulldog Blighty, *Amiga Power*, issue 21, January 1993 coverdisk

Sensible World of Moon Soccer, *Amiga Action*, issue 65, Xmas 1994 coverdisk

Unsensible Soccer, *Amiga Action*, issue 42, March 1993 coverdisk

TOP 10000

SCORE 200

CONTINUE 4

END